PLAYS OF EDMOND ROSTAND

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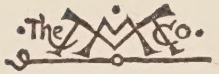

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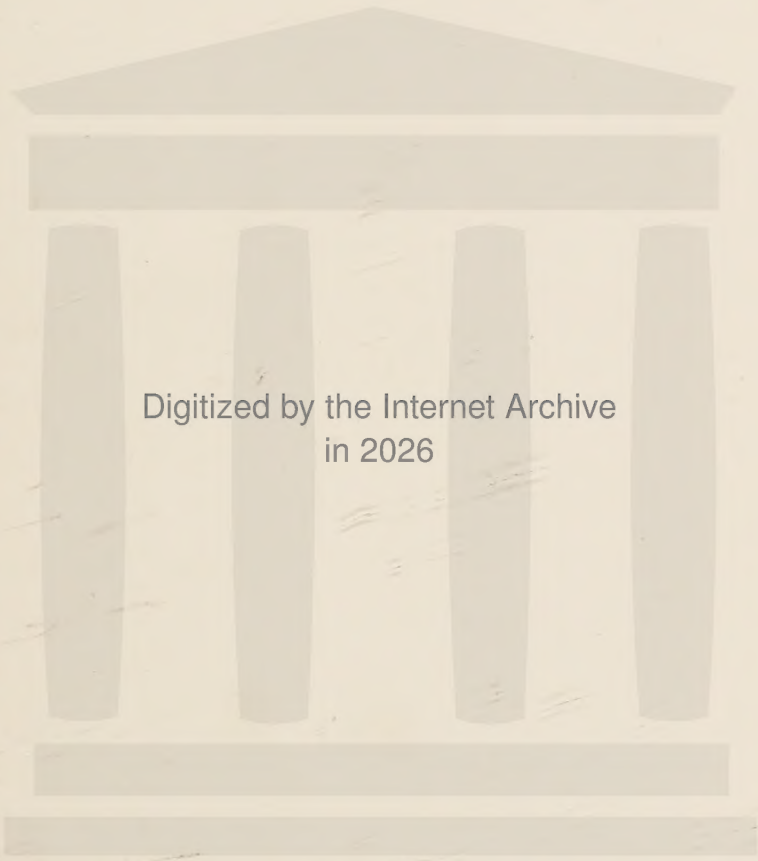
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SEE, I AM COIFFED IN FAIRER, FITTER GUISE!

PLAYS OF EDMOND ROSTAND

TRANSLATED BY

HENDERSON DAINGERFIELD NORMAN

ILLUSTRATED BY IVAN GLIDDEN

VOLUME ONE

NEW YORK
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1921

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Translator's Dedication:

to

Woodrow Wilson

23293

FOREWORD

For twenty-five years, till in December, 1918, he himself entered into light perpetual, Edmond Rostand was the poet of light, from the April starlight of *Romantics* to the full summer sunshine of *Chanticleer*. Because his genius is true to the genius of his people, and because the French language is a most lucid medium, his plays have suffered little from misinterpretation. *Chanticleer* is the one exception. Readers and spectators have been so dazzled by its rays, they have been, for the most part, unable to see the sun.

If Kipling had written a play called *The Lion,* and its scene were laid in his own home county of England, people would, I think, have inferred a patriotic meaning. Yet when Rostand, having written *Cyrano of Bergerac* and *The Eaglet,* completed the triology with *Chanticleer,* the critics, heedless of the fact that the Cock is the emblem of France, acclaimed it as a society satire, and disregarded its larger significance as a patriotic parable.

The reader's enjoyment of the play will be enhanced by careful observation of the lines that introduce the leading characters. Our attention is directed to The Old Hen in the Basket as that ancient France that is the mother of France, the wise old mother whose one concern is the growth of her splendid Cock:

"A Gascon Hen, Pau is her native place."

Patou is Peasant France,

"Guardian of homestead, garden and of farm,"

the peasant who loves the soil and the sunshine of home, and who is first to scent danger to the farmyard; the French peasant,

"Son of all the races,
Artois, Saintonge"; his soul
"the dreaming circle of the pack."

The Pheasant Hen's own lines declare her a child of all ages and all countries, the recurrent feminist and the eternal feminine, yet after all a feminist distinctly French, who

"makes a toilet of a uniform."

The Blackbird's cynical sketch, which introduces Chanticleer on his first appearance, as plainly as the Pigeon's praise shows him, made up of all her provinces, the very Cock of France. From Chanticleer's own beak we have his command to the Magpie at the Guinea's Tea:

"Announce,—without addition, please,—the Cock."

And when the foreign cock asks ironically:

"The Gallic Cock?"

Chanticleer answers:

"None needs to use that name
If native-born and certain of his claim;
But that good name you take upon your beak,
When one says just 'The Cock,'—of him you speak."

Nevertheless, like so much great poetry, its application is at once local and universal,—a light set in the home window, but shining far. Blackbird, Guinea Hen, Peacock and Night Birds of the Play, all have a definite relation to Chanticleer's own poultry yard, yet they and their kin make trouble in every flock. Chanticleer is always Cock of France, but for us all he is the Cock of Dawn. And wherever his cry pierces the blackness, the Night Birds believe and tremble, and seek his life to take it away.

For, mind you, the Secret of Chanticleer is very truth. It *is* work and faith in one's work that makes the world go round. It *is* loving the light and calling for it that brings the Light at last.

As to the translator's share, in all the Plays, but especially in *Chanticleer,* there is only this to say, in words found in a certain old edition of Ossian:

"Uncertain,—in an alien speech,—
While wandering here, some child of chance
Through pangs of keen delight may reach
The power of utterance."

HENDERSON DAINGERFIELD NORMAN.

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ROMANTICS

A Comedy in Three Acts

In Verse

TO

ROSEMONDE

ROMANTICS

LIST OF CHARACTERS

SYLVETTE.

PERCINET.

STRAFOREL.

BERGAMIN, father of PERCINET.

PASQUINOT, father of SYLVETTE.

BLAISE, the gardener.

A WALL, a mute personage.

BRAVOES, MUSICIANS, MOORS, TORCH-BEARERS, A NOTARY, FOUR NEIGHBORS, ETC.

The action may take place anywhere, provided the costumes are pretty.

ACT I

The scene is cut in two by an old, moss-grown wall, engarlanded with a riot of climbing vines. Right, a corner of BERGAMIN'S *park. Left, a corner of* PASQUINOT'S *park. On each side a bench against the wall.*

When the curtain rises, PERCINET *is sitting on top of the wall, with a book on his knees, from which he is reading aloud to* SYLVETTE, *who is standing up on the bench on her side of the wall. She is resting her elbows on the wall and listening enrapt while* PERCINET *reads.*

SCENE I

SYLVETTE, PERCINET

SYLVETTE: Sir Percinet, how beautiful and wise!
PERCINET: Is it not? Hear what Romeo replies:
"It is the lark, the herald of the morn,
No nightingale. Look, love, what envious streaks
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east.
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.
I must be gone."
SYLVETTE (*hurriedly, listening*): 'Sh! . . .
PERCINET: No one. Your heart stops,
Then starts, is like a fluttering bird,
Ready to fly with the first breeze that stirred.
Hear the Immortal Lovers, Juliet's cry:
"Yond light is not daylight, I know it, I:
It is some meteor that the sun exhales,
To be to thee this night a torch-bearer,

And light thee on thy way to Mantua.
Therefore, stay yet, thou need'st not to be gone.
Romeo: Let me be ta'en . . . be put to death.
I am content, so thou wilt have it so.
I'll say yond gray is not the morning's eye,
'Tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow.
Nor that is not the lark, whose notes do beat
The vaulty heaven, high above our heads.
I have more care to stay, than will to go.
Come, Death, and welcome."

SYLVETTE: If Lord Romeo
Say that, 'twill make me cry.

PERCINET: Too mighty book,
I cannot bear so dolorous a look!
So, till to-morrow, I will close its cover,
And make of Romeo a living lover.
(*He shuts the book and looks about him.*)
Adorable, this place, and made to fill
The part of Setting for the Immortal Will.

SYLVETTE: The play is beautiful, and how divine
The wind's accompaniment that sways this vine;
And the scene suits it,—all these shadows green,
Sir Percinet, . . . the poem and the scene
Are lovely, . . . but less beautiful indeed
Than is your voice, half singing while you read.

PERCINET: O naughty flatterer!

SYLVETTE: Unhappy lovers!
How terrible their fate, when one discovers!
(*With a sigh.*) Ah me, I think. . . .

PERCINET: What?

SYLVETTE (*hastily*): Nothing!

PERCINET: What you think
Has made you, on a sudden, very pink.

SYLVETTE (*repeating earnestly*): Nothing!

PERCINET (*shaking his finger at her*): Sweet liar!
Yet your clear eyes say

That which you think. I know!
(*Lowering his voice.*) Our parents, eh?

SYLVETTE: Maybe.

PERCINET: Your father and my own; the hate
That sunders them!

SYLVETTE: Yes! Oh, mysterious fate!
Often I weep beneath my father's rule.
Last month, returning from my convent school,
My father led me to this grassy space,
And said: "My child, behold the dwelling place
Of Bergamin, mine ancient enemy.
Father and son thine eyes must never see.
Promise me well,—or lose a daughter's place,—
Thou, too, wilt be the foe of all his race.
Twixt mine and his there can be no accord."
I promised. . . . See how well I keep my word!

PERCINET: Have I not sworn by all high heaven above you
That I will hate you always? And I love you.

SYLVETTE: O holy Virgin!

PERCINET: Love thee.

SYLVETTE: It is sin!

PERCINET: Oh, very great! But if a man begin
By being warned,—it makes him seek that wife.
Kiss me, Sylvette.

SYLVETTE: But, never in my life!
(*She jumps down from the bench and goes a little distance away.*)

PERCINET: Nevertheless, you love me.

SYLVETTE: You think so?

PERCINET: Little one,
I tell the truth your heart would shyly shun.
Let's doubt no longer what our hearts both know.
I say . . . just what you said a while ago,—
Yes, you yourself, Sylvette, comparing thus
The Lovers of Verona to . . . to . . . us.

SYLVETTE: I didn't, either!

PERCINET: Yes, you did, Sylvette.
Thy father seemed like that of Juliet,
Mine was like Romeo's;—a fate as sad,
Parents as cruel,—and a love as mad!
And I will brave them both for love of you,
Pasquintot-Capulet, Pa-Montague.
SYLVETTE (*coming a little closer to the wall*):
Then we're in love! How quickly it came on.
Sir Percinet, how could it?
PERCINET: Love is born,
One knows not how or why, when first it flutters.
I saw you pass,—peeped through my window shutters.
SYLVETTE: And I saw you. . . .
PERCINET: Our shy eyes seemed to call.
SYLVETTE: One day, I gathered nuts hard by the wall,
By chance, . . .
PERCINET: By chance I read Will Shakespeare here.
Ah, see how Destiny aids souls mates, dear!
SYLVETTE: A bold breeze flung my fillet at your feet.
PERCINET: To give it thee, I climbed this bench, my sweet.
SYLVETTE (*climbing*): And I climbed this one.
PERCINET: Every day since then
Darling, I wait thee here, most blest of men.
With throbbing heart, I hear thy laughter call,—
Bird twittering in its nest,—below the wall,
Light laughter rising, till thy bright hair shines
A glint of glory in the verdant vines.
SYLVETTE: Since we are in love, we ought to plight our troth.
PERCINET: You read my very thought, upon my oath!
SYLVETTE: Last of the Bergamins,—how melancholy!—
The last Pasquinot plights thee.
PERCINET: Noble folly!
SYLVETTE: They'll talk of us when future ages gather.
PERCINET: Each tender lover and each cruel father.
SYLVETTE: But, dear, who knows,—perhaps God wills it so,—
Healing of hatred from our love may flow.

PERCINET: I'm not so sure.
SYLVETTE: Me, I have faith in Fate.
I know at least five ways to do it. Wait!
Six splendid ways.
PERCINET: Truly? Oh, what?
SYLVETTE: Suppose,—
In romances one reads such things as those,—
The Heir Apparent with his Court might move,—
Might pass our house. I'd tell our hapless love,
And of our fathers' hatred,—the whole thing;
—Don Roderick and Chimene and the King,—
The Prince would call our fathers. His command
Would make them friends and . . .
PERCINET: Give me thy dear hand!
SYLVETTE: Or it might happen like another tale:
Thou wouldst fall ill. All mortal aid would fail.
PERCINET: Madly my father'd cry, "What wouldst thou, boy?"
SYLVETTE: Thou wouldst say, "Sylvette!"
PERCINET: His heart would melt, with joy;
And I'd recover . . . thee!
SYLVETTE: Or this romance,—
An old Duke sees my portrait by some chance.
He loves me,—sends his squire to tell me so,
And begs to make me duchess. . . .
PERCINET: You say, No!
SYLVETTE: He foams with rage. One evening after dark,
I dream of thee, all lonely, in the park;
I am seized,—I shriek. . . .
PERCINET: I hear . . . divine his guilt!
Twice—thrice I plunge my dagger to the hilt
In his vile breast . . . fight like a lion . . . slay . . .
SYLVETTE: Three or four men. My father comes. "Now say
Who is this hero?" And he learns thy name.
"He who has saved my daughter well may claim
Her hand in marriage." Oh, he quite relents!
Thy father sees thy valor and consents.

PERCINET: And we live long and happy ever after.
SYLVETTE: That's not impossible, or food for laughter?
PERCINET (*hearing a noise*): Some one . . .
SYLVETTE (*losing her head*): Let's embrace . . .
PERCINET (*embracing her*): Thou wilt come, confess,
Thou wilt not fail this evening at . . .
SYLVETTE: N-no.
PERCINET: Yes.
SYLVETTE (*disappearing behind the wall*): Thy father!
(PERCINET *leaps quickly from the wall.*)

SCENE II

SYLVETTE (*who has come down from the wall, and is consequently invisible to* BERGAMIN), PERCINET, BERGAMIN

BERGAMIN: In this corner! More and more
You moon here. Why?
PERCINET: My father, I adore
This corner of the park . . . the bench . . . the shades
The vine flings on the wall . . . its free cascades.
Gracious and graceful, is it not, this vine?
See these festoons. An arabesque each line.
One feels at peace where these soft breezes call.
BERGAMIN: How does the wall help?
PERCINET: I adore . . . this wall!
BERGAMIN: Nothing that I can see here to adore.
SYLVETTE (*hidden, aside*): No, he can't see!
PERCINET: I love it always more,
This old wall, crowned with grass, engarlanded
Here, with green ivy, there, with woodbine red;
Aristolochia, glycin beautiful,
Its lovely clusters like a fleece of wool;
Dear ancient wall, half crumbling, in whose spaces
Eyes lifted to the sun, are rosy daisies,
And honeysuckle,—all these starry flowers,
And moss so thick upon this wall of ours,

Even the bench that hard beneath must cling
Is robed with velvet, throne for any king!

BERGAMIN: You flighty boy, shall I believe that all
Thy sheep's eyes seek the bright eyes of a wall?

PERCINET: The bright eyes of a wall!
(*He turns to the wall.*) Ah, lovely eyes,
Astonishingly blue as smiling skies,
Dear flowers, clear eyes, you are the soul's delight.
If tears empearl these chalices of light,
We'll kiss that dew off,—change that mournful story.

BERGAMIN: Wall's got no eyes.

PERCINET: It has a morning glory!
(*Gracefully he plucks one and hands it to* BERGAMIN.)

SYLVETTE: Dear Jesus, what a soul!

BERGAMIN: The boy's an ass!
I know right well what brought you to this pass.
(PERCINET *and* SYLVETTE *both give a start of alarm.*)
You come to read in secret!
(*He takes the book that is sticking out of* PERCINET'S *pocket and looks at the cover.*)
Plays!
(*He opens the book and lets it drop, horrified.*)
In verse!
Poetry! That's why you get worse and worse.
Mooning! And hiding! It's enough to shock you,—
Your grown son talk about "aristolochia."
—And blue eyes of a wall. You go along!
Walls ain't for pretty, but they must be strong.
I'll cut away this foolish greenery,
Might be weak places hid that I can't see.
Better to guard us from our hateful neighbor
A new white wall is worth the price o' labor.
White, clean and bare, and no aristolochia
But bits of broken bottles. That will block you,
Aye, that will keep you off, you old rapscallion!
Those bottles in array, a sharp battalion;
(*He shakes his fist in the direction of* PASQUINOT'S *park.*)

PERCINET: Mercy!
BERGAMIN: No mercy, I'll show none at all.
Bottles shall bristle all along the wall!
SYLVETTE *and* PERCINET: Oh!
BERGAMIN (*sitting down on the bench*): Let's have a chat.
(*He gets up, and walks back a few steps, eying the wall suspiciously.*) But, if walls haven't eyes,
Still, walls have ears!
(*He makes a motion as if to climb up on the bench. Panic seizes* PERCINET. SYLVETTE *crouches behind the wall, a tiny figure; but* BERGAMIN, *with a wry face, abandons his notion, having felt a rheumatic twinge. He signs to his son to climb and look.*)
See, Son, if someone spies.
PERCINET (*readily, climbing on the bench and leaning down to* SYLVETTE, *who is already on tiptoe again*):
This evening!
SYLVETTE (*giving him her finger tips, which he kisses*):
Oh, before the hour can toll.
PERCINET (*whispering*): I'll be there. . . .
SYLVETTE: I adore. . . .
BERGAMIN: Eh?
PERCINET (*jumping down*): Not a soul.
BERGAMIN (*reassured, sits down again*):
My son, I want a wife for you, so I . . .
SYLVETTE: Ah!
BERGAMIN: What's that?
PERCINET: Nothing.
BERGAMIN: Yes, a feeble cry.
PERCINET (*looking into the air*): A wounded bird . . .
SYLVETTE: Alas!
PERCINET: Caught in the branches.
BERGAMIN: After reflexion, for I take no chances,
I have made my choice.
PERCINET (*walks away, whistling*): Dear! Dear!
BERGAMIN: 'Twill cost you dear
If you rebel.

PERCINET (*coming back*): Dear! Dear! Dear! Dear!
BERGAMIN: Don't whistle like a tom-tit, silly jay,—
She's rich, still fairly young, a pearl, I say.
PERCINET: If I won't have your pearl?
BERGAMIN: You say this thing?
Wretch! Rebel! Wait, I'll show you, sir. . . .
PERCINET (*pushing aside the cane his father raises*):
The Spring
Fills all the hedge-rows with the sound of wings.
The forest sees, fluttering above her springs,
Her mating birds caress.
BERGAMIN: Indecent! Chaff!
PERCINET (*still dodging the uplifted stick*):
All Nature smiles. Hark! 'Tis young April's laugh.
The butterflies. . . .
BERGAMIN: Clean daft!
PERCINET: In green fields rove
To find and wed the wild flowers of their love.
Love . . .
BERGAMIN: Bandit!
PERCINET: Bids hearts blossom in their season,—
You'd have me make a marriage, sir, of reason!
BERGAMIN: That shall you, scapegrace!
PERCINET: Never! By my word,
I swear, by this wall, which I hope has heard,
That I will marry so romantically
Never was marriage such as mine will be,—
A marriage madly, royally romantic!
(*He dodges and runs off.*)
BERGAMIN (*running after him*): I'll stop your antics!

SCENE III

SYLVETTE; *later,* PASQUINOT

SYLVETTE: It is not so frantic,
Pa's hatred. I quite share it now.
PASQUINOT (*coming in, Left*): What's this?
What are you doing in this corner, miss?

SYLVETTE: Nothing. Just walking!
PASQUINOT: Here? Near foes so spiteful?
Are you not frightened?
SYLVETTE: N-no, I am not . . . frightful.
PASQUINOT: Thou, near this wall alone! Thou art forbidden
To approach this wall. You know what there is hidden.
Look on that park. On yonder side, they gather,
Mine ancient foemen!
SYLVETTE: Oh, I know it, Father.
PASQUINOT: Expose thyself to words outrageous,
To . . . What affronts might they not heap on us
If that old scoundrel or his whelp should find
You day-dream near this wall! It chills my mind,—
Sets me a-shaking, just the very thought!
Aha, their wicked plans shall come to naught.
I'll make this top bristle with iron spikes.
—That will impale the fellow and his likes!
They'll run him through if he so much as touch.
SYLVETTE (*aside*): He will not do it. It would cost too much;
A little close, papa.
PASQUINOT: Now run away.
(SYLVETTE *goes out; her father watches her with a satisfied expression.*)

SCENE IV

BERGAMIN, PASQUINOT

BERGAMIN (*speaking off stage*): This note to Straforel, without delay.
PASQUINOT (*runs quickly to the wall and climbs up on it*): Bergamin!
BERGAMIN (*same business*): Pasquinot!
(*They embrace.*)
PASQUINOT: How goes it?
BERGAMIN: Fairly.
PASQUINOT: Thy gout?

BERGAMIN: Better. Thy cold?
PASQUINOT: Thou knowst I'm rarely
Free from that plague.
BERGAMIN: Well, well, the match is made!
PASQUINOT: Hein?
BERGAMIN: I heard all, hidden in this leafy shade.
They adore each other!
PASQUINOT: Bravo!
BERGAMIN (*rubbing his hands together*): All our doing!
Widowers, fathers, we arranged their wooing.
Me with a son his mother willy nilly
Would christen Percinet. . . .
PASQUINOT: The name *is* silly.
BERGAMIN: Thou with Sylvette, dreamy blue eyes and all,
We with one aim. . . .
PASQUINOT: To take away the wall. . . .
BERGAMIN: And live together . . .
PASQUINOT: Join our boundaries, man. . . .
BERGAMIN: Old neighbor's hobby . . .
PASQUINOT: And old landlord's plan!
BERGAMIN: For that we needed . . .
PASQUINOT: Marry our two children!
BERGAMIN: Marry those two. . . . At first, 'twas quite bewilderin'
If they suspected what we two desire,
The goose was cooked. Their fancy must be fired,
Two young folks, both chock-full of poetry.
With them at school, we made our plans, y' see,
And married them to suit ourselves, but here
College and convent turned them loose this year.
I says, says I, "Oppose it, and no doubt
We'll make those children seek each other out."
To love in secret, guilty and pursued,
Would please 'em; so I cooked up this here feud.
My plan! You always questioned its success.
Now all that's lacking is a father's yes.

PASQUINOT: Maybe. But how? Careful, is what I say.
Consenting now would give our game away.
I have called you rascal, knave, gump . . .
BERGAMIN: Gump, indeed?
Rascal's enough. Don't go beyond the need.
PASQUINOT: What pretext?
BERGAMIN: Hear. I got the hint from them.
Thy daughter's prattle planned our stratagem.
They babbled, and I listened, heard them say,
This evening they'll meet here. My Percinet
Comes first, of course. The moment thy Sylvette
Appears,—masked bandits leap from hiding, set
On and kidnap her. She shrieks! My boy
Rushes to her assistance! Rescue! Joy!
The bravos flee! You come. I have arrived.
Thy daughter, saved. My hero son, survived.
Thou givest thy blessing. Tears paternal flow.
My heart relents. We bless the pair. Tableau.
PASQUINOT: Ah, that is genius. That's a true example
Of genius!
BERGAMIN (*modest and judicial*): Talent, say—yes—talent's ample.
'Sh! Look who comes. The bravo, Straforel.
I wrote him fully. Little's left to tell.
He has the outline. Details must be painted
For the abduction.
(STRAFOREL *in a grand bandit costume appears at the back, centre, and advances majestically.*)

SCENE V

The Same. STRAFOREL

BERGAMIN (*coming down from the wall, and greeting* STRAFOREL): Hum! Make you acquainted
With my friend, Pasquinot.
STRAFOREL (*bowing*): Sir . . .
(*Straightening up, he is surprised not to see* PASQUINOT.)

BERGAMIN (*pointing to* PASQUINOT, *still sitting astride the wall*): On the wall.
STRAFOREL (*aside*): Astonishing! He's ripe enough to fall.
BERGAMIN: Master, my scheme appeared . . .
STRAFOREL: Elementary.
BERGAMIN: You understand, act quick . . .
STRAFOREL: Am silent, very.
BERGAMIN: A feigned abduction. Duel feigned. Be sure . . .
STRAFOREL: Aye. . . .
BERGAMIN: Choose skilled fencers. I could not endure
A wound for my young cock,—my only son.
STRAFOREL: I'll handle him myself. 'Twill be well done.
BERGAMIN: Ah, well, that bridge is safe before it's crossed.
PASQUINOT (*whispering to* BERGAMIN):
Say . . . better ask him what it's going to cost.
BERGAMIN: What do you ask, dear sir, for an abduction?
STRAFOREL: Sometimes there's extras, sometimes a reduction.
Abductions, sir, have quite a range of prices.
But in this case according to advices,
We need not count the cost. Your lad and lass
Are worth, one fancies, one of the first class.
BERGAMIN (*dazzled*): Ah, you have classes?
STRAFOREL: From a common ruction
To the highest, sir. Imagine an abduction,
Two men in black, vulgar kidnappers, creep
Up in a cab. That kind comes very cheap.
Next, night abductions. Those by day cost more.
Pompous abduction with a coach and four,
And lackeys curled and powdered.—Wigs, I figure,
Are always extra.—Eunuch, mute or negro,
Sbirro, brigand, musquetaire,—in courses;
There's post abductions, two horse; three, four horses,
One can augment *ad libitum* the number;—
Top-chaise abductions, always rather sombre;
Abductions in a bag,—burlesque. Then take
Romantic ones in boats.—Calls for a lake.

Venetian gondola takes a lagoon!
Abductions by the pale light of the moon!
—Moonlight comes high, sirs, but it *is* good form.—
Abduction sinister lit by a storm,
Flashing of lightning and of steel,—quite grim,
Mantels dark-hued, plumed hats with spreading brim;
Abduction, country-style, one for the city;
Torch-light abduction,—that one's rather pretty!
The masked abduction, strictly classical;
There's one to music, suited to a ball:
The sedan-chair abduction makes a stir.
That's gayest, newest, most distinguished, sir.

BERGAMIN (*nodding to* PASQUINOT): Well?

PASQUINOT: Hon . . . well?

BERGAMIN: I think, 'twill charm their senses
To go the whole hog—never mind expenses.
I say, let's have a little of each one,
Make an abduction. . . .

STRAFOREL: Plumed? It could be done.

BERGAMIN: Let's give the children the romance they ask,—
Sedan chair, torches, music, plume and mask.

STRAFOREL (*making memoranda*): Let's see . . . to make these varied groupings dextrous,
Abduction of the highest class . . . with extras.

BERGAMIN: Done!

STRAFOREL: Soon I will return. But it behooves
You leave the gate unbarred, and oil the groves.

BERGAMIN: Open and noiseless.

STRAFOREL (*bowing*): Now, my best respect, sirs.
(*As he goes out.*)
Abduction of the highest class, with extras.

SCENE VI

BERGAMIN, PASQUINOT

PASQUINOT: With his grand air, he goes, the honest one,
And never named the price.

BERGAMIN: As good as done!
We will pull down the wall; have one fireside! . . .
PASQUINOT: Winters in Paris in one house, beside!
BERGAMIN: Make all those charming changes we have planned.
PASQUINOT: We'll shape the yews.
BERGAMIN: Whiten the walks with sand. . . .
PASQUINOT: Set out round flower beds, finer than a fiddle,
—Our monograms in posies in the middle!
BERGAMIN: It's too severe and plain, this stretch of grass.
PASQUINOT: We'll liven it with bowls of colored glass.
BERGAMIN: Buy a new fountain for the gold fish, hey?
PASQUINOT: Yes, with an egg that dances in the spray.
We'll have a rookery! Old son, say whether . . .
BERGAMIN: We've got our wish!
PASQUINOT: Our old age, spent together.
BERGAMIN: Thy girl is settled!
PASQUINOT: And thy boy, also!
TOGETHER: Ah, my old Bergamin!
Ah, my old Pasquinot!
(*They fall into each other's arms.*)

SCENE VII

The Same: SYLVETTE, PERCINET, *who enter suddenly from different sides of the wall*

SYLVETTE (*seeing her father hold* BERGAMIN): Ah!
BERGAMIN (*seeing* SYLVETTE, *to* PASQUINOT): Thy daughter!
PERCINET (*seeing his father hold* PASQUINOT): Ah!
PASQUINOT (*seeing* PERCINET, *to* BERGAMIN): Thy son!
BERGAMIN (*whispering, to* PASQUINOT): Let's fight!
(*They change the embrace to a clinch.*) Take that!
PASQUINOT: Villain!
SYLVETTE (*catching her father's coat tail*): Papa!
PERCINET (*same business*): Papa!
BERGAMIN: Let go, you brat!
PASQUINOT: 'Twas he insulted me!

BERGAMIN: He hit me! Hah!
PASQUINOT: Coward!
SYLVETTE: Pa!
BERGAMIN: Knave!
PERCINET: Pa!
PASQUINOT: Liar! Wretch!
SYLVETTE: Papa!

(*They separate the combatants.*)

PERCINET (*leading his father away*): Come in. It's late.

BERGAMIN (*struggling to turn back*): This rage! This paroxysm!

PASQUINOT (*same business, with* SYLVETTE): I foam. . . .

SYLVETTE (*coaxing him into the house*): The night air, and your rheumatism.

SCENE VIII

Daylight fades softly. For a moment, the stage is empty. Later, in PASQUINOT'S *park, enter* STRAFOREL *and his Bravoes, Musicians, etc.*

STRAFOREL: A single star enstars the heavens fair.
Day dies.
(*He places his men.*)
You there. . . . You, there. . . . You, there.
The sacring bell will sound. The hour is near.
White, glimmering through the dusk, she will appear.
I'll whistle. Then . . .
(*He looks up at the sky.*)
The moon! Could heart expect
A fitter setting for a fine effect?
(*Looking at the extravagant cloaks of the Bravoes.*)
The cloaks are excellent. Toss back that cape. . . .
That's better. . . . You, on guard, and mind your shape!
(*The sedan chair is carried in.*)
Chair in the shadows. . . .
(*Looking at the bearers, who are black.*)

Moors! Good! . . . That will do.
(*Calling into the wings.*)
Torches, keep hidden till you get your cue.
(*One sees, dimly, in the background, the pink reflection of the torches, hidden among the trees. Enter the Musicians.*)
Musicians,—there, where torch-lights cast pink roses.
Be graceful,—pliant,—varied,—in your poses.
Mandolin, stand! Alto, be seated! So!
Look like *The Woodland Concert* of Watteau.
(*Severely, to one of the Bravoes.*)
First-Bravo-in-a-Mask, what's that? You twist?
There, that's much better. Fine! Soft music. Hist!
Oh, will you get together? . . . Do, me, re. . . .
(*He puts on his mask.*)

SCENE IX

The Same. PERCINET

PERCINET (*enters slowly. As he declaims the following lines the shadows deepen and the sky grows bright with stars*):
Father is quiet. I could steal away.
Dusk wraps the world. Ghost-dim, the elder flower
Adds subtle sweetness to this magic hour.
STRAFOREL (*whispering to the Musicians*): Music!
(*The Musicians play softly till the end of the act.*)
PERCINET: I tremble like a reed. I grow so
Faint with delight. She's coming!
STRAFOREL (*to the Musicians*): *Amoroso.*
PERCINET: This evening, my first tryst. O hour to bless,
The soft breeze rustles like a silken dress . . .
Gray twilight hides the flowers . . . tears fill my eyes.
Oh, hidden blooms, your perfumes sweeter rise!
Tall tree, a star ensilvers thy great dome!
Whence is this music? Lo, the night has come.

Sweet night has come. Dear day, you die.
The deepening azure of the sky
Brightens with lamps, serene and high,
Lit one by one.
While in the pools the hylas call,
The stars shine out, encircling all
The moon's slim crescent. Pale beams fall.
I wait, alone.

O gleams of sapphire! Diamond rays!
Stars,—I, your lover all my days,
In ardent twilights sang your praise
Lost in a mist.
My song has found a new theme now.
Sweet, whispered words claim all my vow.
Short curls bedeck a star-white brow.
Sylvette keeps tyrst!

Dear stars of heaven, high astral light,
Millions on millions, blue and bright,
Yet shall be put to shame this night,
At high heaven's bars.
She will appear. From your clear skies
You suddenly shall see her eyes,
And ye yourselves your rays despise,
My poor, dimmed stars!

(*In the distance a bell rings.*)

SCENE X

The Same, SYLVETTE, *later,* BERGAMIN, PASQUINOT

SYLVETTE (*appearing at the stroke of the clock*):
The sacring bell! He waits! . . .
(*A signal is given.* STRAFOREL *rushes up to her; torches appear.*) Ah!

(*The Bravoes seize her and bear her swiftly to the sedan chair.*) To my aid!

PERCINET: Just heaven!

SYLVETTE: Percinet!

PERCINET: Be not afraid!
I come!
(*He scrambles over the wall, draws his sword and clashes with the Bravoes.*)
Take that! That! That!

STRAFOREL (*to the Musicians*): *Tremolo.*
(*The violins strike up a dramatic tremolo. The Bravoes flee.*)

STRAFOREL (*in a theatrical voice*): Per Baccho!
This youth fights like the devil!
(*Duel between* PERCINET *and* STRAFOREL. STRAFOREL *suddenly puts his hand to his breast.*) The fatal blow!
(*He falls.*)

PERCINET (*rushes to* SYLVETTE): Sylvette!
(*Tableau. She is in the sedan chair, the curtain drawn back; he kneels.*)

SYLVETTE: My rescuer!

PASQUINOT (*rushing in*): Bergamin's son!
My child's deliverer! Take her! Thou hast won!

SYLVETTE *and* PERCINET: Heaven!
(BERGAMIN *enters precipitately from his side, followed by servants with torches.*)

PASQUINOT (*to* BERGAMIN, *as he appears on the top of the wall*):
Thy son, sir, is a hero! Bless the pair
And pardon me!

PERCINET (*whispering*): Sylvette, we're dreaming. Whisper, darling, so
Lest our own voices bid the dear dream go.

BERGAMIN: Hate dies at Hymen's altar. Love is all.
The Peace is made.
(*He points dramatically to the wall.*)
The Pyrenees must fall.

PERCINET: Who would have dreamed Father could be so changed?
SYLVETTE: I told you so. I knew it would be arranged.
(*While they go up, with* PASQUINOT, STRAFOREL *lifts himself, and hands a paper to* BERGAMIN.)
BERGAMIN (*whispering*): This paper, signed, and this blank space to fill. . . .
What is this, if you please?
STRAFOREL: Sir, it's my bill.
(*He falls back.*)

(*Curtain*)

ACT II

The setting is the same. The wall has disappeared. The benches that were set against the wall now are placed on the Right hand and the Left.

The grounds are altered as to details. There are flower beds, summer houses, plaster statues, a rustic table, chairs. As the curtain rises, PASQUINOT, *sitting on the bench at the Right, reads his Gazette.* BLAISE *is raking the flower beds.*

SCENE I

PASQUINOT; BLAISE; *later,* BERGAMIN

BLAISE: This evening, sir, the notary comes, you say?
A month ago, they took the wall away,
And you all live together. Time, I vow.
Our little lovers must be happy now.

PASQUINOT (*raising his head and looking around*):
It's fine without the wall—eh, Blaise?

BLAISE: Superb, sir.

PASQUINOT: Yes,
My park has gained cent per cent.
(*He leans down and touches a tuft of grass.*)
Here, here, this grass
Is damp. It has been watered! It's my rule (*furious*)
Never to water before sundown, fool!

BLAISE (*placidly*): 'Twas Mr. Bergamin that gave the order.

PASQUINOT: Ah! Our good Bergamin does seem to border
On stubbornness. He waters out of reason.
Good gardeners water little, but in season.
Oh, well!

(*To* BLAISE) Make haste. Set out the potted plants.

(BLAISE *goes back, and begins to carry in the potted plants from the green house.* PASQUINOT *reads.* BERGAMIN *appears,* C.)

BERGAMIN (*watering the shrubbery from a huge watering pot*):

Ouf! Give a flower the drenching that it wants.
Enough is not enough, as some folks think.
(*To a tree*) Thirsty, old fellow? Come and have a drink.
Here's water for you. Dry! I told you! Very!
(*Putting his watering pot down and looking around complacently.*)
My park has gained. I like this statuary.
(*Seeing* PASQUINOT.)
Good day.
(*No answer.*)
Good day.
(*No answer.*)
Good day.
(*No answer.*)
Well, I attend.

PASQUINOT: We see each other all the time, my friend.

BERGAMIN: Eh? Well?

(*Seeing the plants* BLAISE *is setting out.*)
Put those plants back!

(BLAISE, *flustered, carries them away precipitately.* PASQUINOT *raises his eyes to heaven, shrugs his shoulders, and reads.* BERGAMIN *walks idly up and down and at last sits down by* PASQUINOT *on the bench. Suddenly, melancholy*)—

BERGAMIN: Soft as a mouse,
At this hour I would sally from my house . . .

PASQUINOT (*musingly, lowering his paper*):

And I, from mine, like some marauding stranger.
It was amusing.

BERGAMIN: Secrecy!

PASQUINOT: And danger!

BERGAMIN: We stalked the boy and girl as hunters stalk
Their game, before we had a dish of talk.
PASQUINOT: One risked, each time he climbed the wall alone
A fall, a bruise perhaps a broken bone.
BERGAMIN: And yet our friendly gossip did not fail.
We hunted it like Indians on the trail.
PASQUINOT: I'd steal along just where the hedge was thickest
—It was amusing.
BERGAMIN: If to crawl was quickest
My breeches at the knees were stained with green.
PASQUINOT: What lies we told! And that there fighting scene!
BERGAMIN: Our talk of grudge and hate.
PASQUINOT: It was amusing!
(*Yawning.*) Bergamin?
BERGAMIN (*yawning*): Pasquinot?
PASQUINOT: Think what we are losing.
BERGAMIN: Pshaw, no!
(*After a reflective pause.*)
That's funny. We do miss those antics.
Can this be the revenge of our Romantics?
(*Silence. He looks at* PASQUINOT, *who reads*):
His waistcoat lacks a button. A reproach
To a man's raising.
(*He gets up, walks away, comes back, walks up and down.*)
PASQUINOT (*looking at him over the edge of his paper*):
Like some huge cockroach,
Scuttling about, coat tails like shards, but thicker.
BERGAMIN (*looking at him*):
Squints when he reads,—looks like a goollylicker
After a butterfly.
(*He walks back, whistling.*)
PASQUINOT (*aside, nervously*): A trick. Whistling to beat the piper.
(*Aloud.*) Oh, quit that! Whistling like a blowing viper.
BERGAMIN: Motes are apparent in our brother's eyes.
Concerning beams, we are not half so wise.
You have your ways!

PASQUINOT: I?
BERGAMIN: Yes. You can't sit still.
You sniffle all the time,—it makes me ill,—
You King of Colds, or sneezing that-a-way.
You tell one story twenty times a day.
PASQUINOT (*who, still seated, has crossed his legs and is swinging one foot*): But . . .
BERGAMIN: Always you sit,—it shows a lack of sense, sir,—
Swinging your foot before you like a censer.
At table, you roll bread crumbs in a ball.
It's you have ways to make a man's flesh crawl!
PASQUINOT: Blue-moldy for excitement! That's the story!
You've leisure now to make an inventory.
You count my ways, my tricks, tell all the list.
Communal life is a great oculist.
My blindness, too, is cured. I see your pride.
Your meanness, your bad manners, magnified.
A fly is pretty and amusing both,—
But it becomes a monster in the broth.
BERGAMIN: I have suspected,—now I see it all.
PASQUINOT: What?
BERGAMIN: The wall flattered you!
PASQUINOT: You, too, need wall!
BERGAMIN: Together, we can't want to see each other.
PASQUINOT (*explosively*): We have not lived, since we have lived together!
BERGAMIN (*smugly*): Oh, well, sir. Very well. But this our plight
Was not done for ourselves, eh?
PASQUINOT: You are right.
BERGAMIN: 'Twas for our children.
PASQUINOT: For our children. Then
Let's suffer silently, endure like men
Our common loss. It must not be apparent.
BERGAMIN: Denial is the lot of every parent.
(SYLVETTE *and* PERCINET *appear, Left, back, among the*

trees. They walk slowly across the lawn, arms entwined; they make lofty gestures.)

PASQUINOT: 'Sh! here are the lovers.

BERGAMIN (*watching them*): Do you see those poses?
They think they're acting out apotheoses.

PASQUINOT: Since their adventure, each, upon my soul,
Sees on the other's head an aureole.

BERGAMIN: This is the hour that, copying pose and looks
From "Pilgrim Lovers" in the picture books,
They come each day, as punctual as the dial,
To make the stations of their "True Love's Trial."
(SYLVETTE *and* PERCINET, *who had disappeared for a moment, Right, reappear a little nearer and come down.*)
Here are our pilgrims.

PASQUINOT: If their prattle prove
Like it has been, 'twill be worth hearing.
(BERGAMIN *and* PASQUINOT *slip behind a clump of bushes.*)

SCENE II

SYLVETTE, PERCINET; BERGAMIN, PASQUINOT (*hidden*)

PERCINET: Love!

SYLVETTE: I love thee.
(*They stop.*) The illustrious spot we near.

PERCINET: Right here the deed was done. Aye, it was here!
The brute fell heavily, transfixéd, thus.

SYLVETTE: There, I, Andromeda . . .

PERCINET: I, Perseus!

SYLVETTE: How many foes opposed thee?

PERCINET: Ten.

SYLVETTE: Twice ten!
Twenty, without the leader of the men.
Thou did'st correct the fury of that beast!

PERCINET: Yes, you are right. . . . Aye, thirty men at least.

SYLVETTE: Tell me how, dagger drawn, eyes like the sun,
You smote them to the earth, my Glorious One!

PERCINET: I can't recall the cuts, the thrusts, the guards.
I know they tumbled like a pack of cards.
SYLVETTE: Wert thou less fair, I had believed,—I tremble
Remembering it,—I saw the Cid himself.
PERCINET: We *do* resemble.
SYLVETTE: Our love lacks but a poem, that should prove thee
Hero of heroes.
PERCINET: There shall be one.
SYLVETTE *and* PERCINET (*together*): I love thee.
SYLVETTE: My dream come true! So often I had vowed
To wed a hero, noble, reckless, proud;
Not the "safe match" of common families.
PERCINET: Ah?
SYLVETTE: Girls are always offered things like these;
The mild young man for sisterly affection;—
One older, like a priest,—"Youth needs direction."
PERCINET: Thou wouldst not wed, on this I can depend,
The inevitable "son of father's friend."
SYLVETTE (*laughing*): No! . . . Hast thou marked,—to come to lower levels,—
Our fathers, in one mood?
PERCINET (*nodding*): And that, the devil's.
BERGAMIN (*behind the bushes*): Hum! . . .
PERCINET: Yes, I know just what has taken place.
BERGAMIN (*hidden*): Hah!
PERCINET: Yes, our flights disturb their humdrum pace.
I do respect our parents' simple nature,
But,—men of middle class and middle stature,—
Our fame o'ershadows them, indeed, quite covers. . . .
PASQUINOT (*behind the bushes*): Hein?
SYLVETTE: Yes,—just "Fathers of the immortal lovers!"
PERCINET (*laughing*): My crest is raised too high for men like these.
SYLVETTE: Thy father seems a little ill at ease,
Like—dare I say it? . . .
PERCINET: Yes, thy will is regal.

SIR·PERCINET; HOW·BEAUTIFUL·AND·WISE!

SYLVETTE: Then . . . like a duck that finds she's hatched an eagle.

BERGAMIN (*hidden*): Ho! Ho!

SYLVETTE (*laughing more gaily*): Poor parents, how our love in secrecy
Made sport of them!

PASQUINOT (*behind the shrubbery*): He! He!

PERCINET: Yes, Destiny
Marks true love's path however it meanders,
Still Scapins are the servants of Leanders.

BERGAMIN (*behind the shrubbery*): Ha! ha!

SYLVETTE: This evening our betrothal, love, begins,
The contract. . . .

PERCINET (*starting down*): I must tell the violins.

SYLVETTE: Be fleet!

PERCINET: I fly.

SYLVETTE (*recalling him*): I grow so kind of late,
My lord, I will conduct you to the gate.
(*They go down, arms interlaced,* SYLVETTE *mincing as she walks.*)
We'll equal, I am sure, the greatest Lovers.

PERCINET: Eternal glory round our romance hovers;
Romeo, Juliet—Alde, Roland,

SYLVETTE: Pyramus
And Thisbe.

PERCINET: Aminta and her Shepherd.

SYLVETTE: All like *Us.*
All of them.
(*They have disappeared; but one hears their voices among the trees.*)

Voice of PERCINET: Francesca of Rimini,
Thou knowest. . . .

Voice of SYLVETTE: Petrarch . . . Laura . . .

BERGAMIN (*coming from behind the shrubbery*):
Well, by Gemini!

SCENE III

PASQUINOT, BERGAMIN

PASQUINOT (*coming out, also; mockingly*):
Smarty, thy plan of which thou wast so fond
Has met thy hopes, and, maybe, gone beyond.
We know now how it works, and, lackadaisy!
Our son and daughter are completely crazy.

BERGAMIN: Thy girl does make me fidgety enough,—
Rape of Lucrece and all that sickening stuff!

PASQUINOT: Thy son, with all that hero-talk he serves,
Is just as racking to a fellow's nerves.

BERGAMIN: What makes me fractious is, we're represented
As dupes, and dull old parents who relented.
Our voluntary blindness, they are sure,
Was genuine; their meetings quite secure.
My feeling may be silly,—but it's hearty.

PASQUINOT: Foresaw that, too, I reckon, Mr. Smarty?
The duel left thy musketeer so flustered
He thinks he's the sole soldier ever mustered.

BERGAMIN: Mustard gets up my nose, but, anyway,
It doesn't make him smart.

PASQUINOT: I'm going to tell!

BERGAMIN: Delay!
Delay's the word. The time for our confessing
Is—after they receive the marriage blessing.
Till the last strain of wedding bell and harp,
We must be silent,—dumb as any carp.

PASQUINOT: So be it. We are caught in our own net,
Thanks to your famous plan.

BERGAMIN: Eh, don't forget
You praised it.

PASQUINOT: Great plan! Great!

BERGAMIN (*aside*): The fellow grates on me.

SCENE IV

The Same. SYLVETTE

(*She enters gaily, a spray of flowers in her hand; with this she gesticulates and waves to* PERCINET, *who has just disappeared; then she comes down to the two fathers.*)

SYLVETTE: Greeting, Papa. Greeting, Papa-to-be!

BERGAMIN: Howdy, child.

SYLVETTE (*mimicking him*): How grumpy! "Howdy, child."
You seem . . . what would you call it? . . . I know.
"Riled."

BERGAMIN: It's Pasquinot who makes . . .

SYLVETTE (*waving her spray of flowers under his nose*):
'Sh, 'sh! Be calm!
I come as Peace; as Peace I wave my palm!
You two still sulk a bit! That's understood;
Of course you can't behave as old friends should.

PASQUINOT (*aside*): The irony!

BERGAMIN (*aloud, mockingly*): 'Tis true! Our earlier state
Was such. . . .

SYLVETTE: Just think! It was a deadly hate.
What dreadful things you said! When I recall
The words I heard, safe sheltered by the wall,
The good, wise wall! So perfect a defense,
You never dreamed of . . .

BERGAMIN (*aside*): Not a lick of sense!

SYLVETTE (*to* PASQUINOT): For every day I came,—you know, at last!—
To meet my Percinet. The sweet days passed
And you,—confess,—knew naught!

PASQUINOT (*sarcastically*): I knew a power!

SYLVETTE: Yet we kept tryst at the appointed hour.
(*To* BERGAMIN): I hear my lover still that time he said,—
'Twas just before the Event,—"Nay, I will wed

Most royally romanticly!" I heard,
And, by our Lady, he has kept his word!

BERGAMIN (*exasperated*):

Truly? And you believe that I was led. . . .

SYLVETTE: Tut! Tut! I *know!* A hundred times I've read
That always, always, Lovers' dreams come true;
That soon or late, stern parents such as you,
Ruled by events in which they have no share,
Give in the end their blessing to the pair.

PASQUINOT: "Ruled by events." . . . No, no, just let me laugh!

SYLVETTE: But we have proved it!

BERGAMIN: If we told you half. . . .

SYLVETTE: What?

BERGAMIN: Nothing.

SYLVETTE (*to* BERGAMIN): Why, why this mysterious air?

BERGAMIN: Because . . .
(*Walking away.*) Her airs are more than I can bear.

PASQUINOT: When with a word one could. . . .
(*He walks away.*) We must keep mum!

SYLVETTE: Nothing-to-say can easily be dumb!

PASQUINOT (*explosively*): "Nothing to say!" You think, you silly lass,
That what has passed has not been brought to pass?
Was the park entered by a fast-barred gate?

BERGAMIN: For girls nowadays do bravoes lie in wait?

SYLVETTE: Do I think. . . . What is this?

BERGAMIN (*coming back and marching up to her*):

Why, it's enough.
'Tis time you understood your parents' bluff.
Aye, since the world was on its way set spinning,
'Twas always blonde perukes that did the winning.
Bartholo, while his hate consumed his liver,
Must always bow at last to Almaviva;
We've triumphed over all the story books,
And white wigs have outwitted blonde perukes.

SYLVETTE: But . . .
PASQUINOT: Once upon a time, papas in stories,
Cassander, Orgon, Argante, won no glories.
You think real life is like your silly rhymes.
They don't describe papas of modern times!
Duped become dupers, for the world does move.
If we had said: "You two must fall in love,"
Would you have done it? No. Our wish was hidden.
To make you do our will, it was forbidden!
SYLVETTE: But then . . . you knew, perhaps. . . .
PASQUINOT: You'd best say, surely!
SYLVETTE: Our meetings?
BERGAMIN: When you whispered most demurely!
SYLVETTE: The benches? . . .
PASQUINOT: Set expressly for such comers!
SYLVETTE: The duel. . . .
BERGAMIN: Acting!
SYLVETTE: And the bravoes. . . .
PASQUINOT: Mummers!
SYLVETTE: My capture. . . . Oh, 'tis false!
BERGAMIN (*fumbling in his pocket*): False? I'll instruct you!
The bill's right here—'twas costly to abduct you!
SYLVETTE (*snatching it from him*): Give it. . . .
(*She reads.*) *"Straforel, confidential agent.*
Abduction . . . to secure betrothal. . . . Pageant."
Ah! *"Eight men in mantles, fifteen francs a cloak."*
Ah! *"Masks."* . . .
BERGAMIN (*to* PASQUINOT): I'm feared it was too soon we spoke.
SYLVETTE (*reading*): *"A sedan chair, pink cushioned. . . .*
Moonlight . . . mist. . . .
A new creation. . . ."
(*She tosses the bill on the table and laughs.*)
Really, quite a list!
PASQUINOT (*surprised*): She isn't vexed?
SYLVETTE: A clever trick, indeed!

But . . . so much effort for so little need!
Dear sir, do you believe that if I love
My Percinet, 'tis for the web you wove?

PASQUINOT: She takes it well.

BERGAMIN (*to* SYLVETTE): You take it mighty well.

PASQUINOT: But still . . . shall Percinet? . . .

SYLVETTE (*hurriedly*): Oh, never tell. . . .
Men are so silly. . . . Nothing must be said!

BERGAMIN: Plenty of good sense in that little head.
And I who thought . . .
(*He looks at his watch.*) The notary's nearly due.
We must make ready.
(*Holding out his hand to* SYLVETTE): Not cross?

SYLVETTE: Cross? With you?

BERGAMIN (*turning back once more after he has started to leave the park*): You feel no grudge?

SYLVETTE: Ah, set your mind at rest.
(PASQUINOT *and* BERGAMIN *go out.*)

SYLVETTE (*with icy fury*):
I hate the old thing! Hate him and detest!

SCENE V

SYLVETTE, PERCINET

PERCINET (*entering hastily*):
Still lingering here? I understand it well.
Chained to this spot where great events befell,
Adventures all unknown. . . .

SYLVETTE (*aside, seated on the bench, Left*): Unknown—I say!
Unknown. . . .

PERCINET: Just there you almost swooning lay,—
And saw me conquer,—like Amadis then,—
Thirty assassins.

SYLVETTE: There were only ten.

PERCINET (*coming nearer*):
Dearest, thou'rt troubled. At our secret tryst,

Your sapphire eyes, deepening to amethyst,—
In their blue depths a shadow I have detected.

SYLVETTE (*aside*): Sometimes, his language seems a bit affected.

PERCINET: But hold! I comprehend what dims those rays.
A wistful memory of perfect days! . . .
You mourn the wall, weighted with vines and flowers,
Witness of those first hopes and fears of ours.
Destroyed, that wall? Nay, that could never be!
Has Romance lost Verona's balcony?

SYLVETTE (*impatiently*): Ah!

PERCINET: Does it not hang where breezes ever play,
That moonlit balcony;—forever sway
The ladder, mid the blossoms of that night,
Haloed forever with supernal light?

SYLVETTE: Oh!

PERCINET (*more and more lyrical*):
The eternal lovers make the immortal scene.
Our wall, demolished, stands in living green,
On which has grown, a mad romantic riot,—
Flower of our wondrous love.

SYLVETTE (*aside*): He won't keep quiet!

PERCINET (*with a smile full of promise*):
The wish that you an hour ago expressed
To see our love in lyric verses dressed, . . .
Ah, well, this poem. . . .

SYLVETTE (*uncomfortably*): Well?

PERCINET: I've written it.

SYLVETTE: Can you make verses?

PERCINET: Huh! I rhyme a bit!
Here's what I made up as I walked along:
"The Foeman Fathers: Epic."

SYLVETTE: Oh!

PERCINET (*posing, ready to declaim*): "First Song:"

SYLVETTE: Oh! . . .

PERCINET: What ails thee?

SYLVETTE: Gladness—nerves. . . .

(*Bursting into tears*) I—I believe you
Had better leave me to compose . . .
(*She turns her back, and buries her face in her handkerchief.*)

PERCINET (*amazed, for a moment*): I leave you.
(*Then, aside, smiling, reassured.*)
This day of days, emotion's natural.
(*He sees the table, Right, and the sheet of paper on which the bill is written. He sits down.*)
I'll just jot down my lines.
(*He takes the paper, is about to write, but stops, his pencil poised, and reads*): "I, Straforel,
Pretended fall, from sword-thrust weak and shifty;
Damage to coat, ten francs: to self love, fifty."
(*Smiling.*) What's this?
(*He continues in a whisper; the smile disappears; his eyes bulge.*)

SYLVETTE (*still sitting on the bench, drying her eyes*):
'Twould take him down if he should know
I nearly told! I must take care!

PERCINET (*standing up*): Ho! Ho!

SYLVETTE (*turning toward him*): You said? . . .

PERCINET (*concealing the bill*): I? Naught.

SYLVETTE (*aside*): It makes it all so shoddy!

PERCINET (*aside*): So that is why we never found the body!

SYLVETTE: He looks so cross. . . . Suppose—suppose he'd guess.
(*She turns toward him, then, seeing that he doesn't move, says coquettishly*): You haven't told me how you like my dress.

PERCINET (*indifferently*): Blue's not becoming. I prefer the rose.

SYLVETTE (*aside, overcome*): Blue not becoming! I believe he knows. (*She looks at the table.*)
The agent's bill . . . the account. . . . I put it there.

PERCINET (*seeing that she is looking for something*):
What on earth ails you, turning everywhere?

SYLVETTE: Oh, nothing.
(*Aside.*) If the wind has blown it down. . . .

(*Aloud, fluffing out her skirt.*)
Nothing. I was just prinking out my gown.
(*Aside.*) If he has found. . . . I'll see.
(*Aloud.*) Hum. . . . You meant to say
Your verses on our love.
(PERCINET *starts; she takes his arm, saying gaily*):
Recite them, pray.

PERCINET: Ah, no!
SYLVETTE: Thy poem of . . .
PERCINET: No!
SYLVETTE: Come! Recount
The great . . .
PERCINET: They're poor. They are of no . . .
SYLVETTE: Account?
PERCINET: I haven't the account. . . .
(*Whirling and looking at her.*) Pardon, I am so . . .
SYLVETTE: Pardon, but . . .
PERCINET: She knows?
SYLVETTE: He knows?
BOTH (*together*): You know?
(*After a minute, they burst out laughing.*) Ha! Ha!
PERCINET: Is it not droll?
SYLVETTE: Oh, very droll!
PERCINET: Truly, they made us play a rôle.
SYLVETTE: A rôle!
PERCINET: Our fathers were good friends?
SYLVETTE: The best of neighbors!
PERCINET: They might be kinsmen, sharing land and labors.
SYLVETTE (*making a curtsey*): I espouse my cousin.
PERCINET: I espouse my cousin.
SYLVETTE: Pretty!
PERCINET: Quite classic!
SYLVETTE: Ordered by the dozen,
Such marriages. True, for the loss of beauty,
We have a love that's docile,—and a duty!
PERCINET: The lands are joined, by this our intervention.

SYLVETTE: We make, we two, a marriage of convention.
Dead, our poor little idyll of the wall!
PERCINET: Don't speak of idylls. Let's forget it all.
SYLVETTE: "A sweet young girl." Yes, I am one of these.
PERCINET: I'm the "safe match," to please our families.
And 'twas as Romeo, Sylvette, I won thee!
SYLVETTE: Now Romeo sheds no romance upon thee.
PERCINET: And do you think you still play Juliet's part?
SYLVETTE: You're acrimonious.
PERCINET: You are rather tart.
SYLVETTE: If you were made ridiculous, God knows
It wasn't my fault.
PERCINET: If I had that pose,
I didn't pose alone.
SYLVETTE: It's all . . . revolting!
Ah, my poor Blue Bird, your fine plumes are moulting!
PERCINET (*mockingly*): Simili-capture!
SYLVETTE: Pseudo-swordsman factor.
PERCINET: Huh, feigned abduction!
SYLVETTE: Huh, a rescue-actor!
Our poetry's a joke, for all our trouble!
It grew before our eyes, a rainbow bubble,
Bright-hued, and lovelier than summer roses.
It bursts, and soapsuds sprinkle on our noses!
PERCINET: So, Lover whom I mimicked, silly wretch;
Lady, whose slippers she might meekly fetch,
Shakespearean couple, so divinely wrought,
We have in common with you naught, naught!
SYLVETTE: Naught!
PERCINET: Thinking to make diviner harmony,
We played . . . not Shakespeare . . . but a parody!
SYLVETTE: Our nightingale was but a caged canary!
PERCINET: Our wall, a puppet stage by some vagary.
And when we met there every day,—appearing
With bated breath, despairing, hoping, fearing,

Brave lovers whose immortal fame would linger,—
Puppets we were, on the paternal finger!

SYLVETTE: True. But we'll seem still sillier if found
To love each other less.

PERCINET: Let love abound!
They bid us love. We will not do them wrong!

SYLVETTE: Oh, let's adore! . . .

PERCINET: "Adore" is not too strong!

SYLVETTE: Love could console disaster greater far.
Am I right, Treasure?

PERCINET: It is true, my Star!

SYLVETTE: Good bye, my Soul!

PERCINET: Good evening, O my bride!

SYLVETTE: I'll think of thee, my Heart . . . on my own side!

PERCINET: I, here on mine. Farewell.

SYLVETTE: Good evening.
(*She goes out.*)

PERCINET: Made a joke!
I, so deceived! Who comes in this wide cloak,
Which yet permits the doublet strange to show?
This bearded fellow, whom I do not know?
(STRAFOREL, *entering at these words, stalks majestically across the scene.*)

SCENE VI

PERCINET, STRAFOREL

PERCINET: What is it?

STRAFOREL: It concerns a modest sum.

PERCINET: A tradesman?

STRAFOREL: Yes. Run tell your pa I've come.
That's a good boy.

PERCINET: Your name before I go?

STRAFOREL: My name is Straforel.

PERCINET (*starting back*): He—here? Ah, no!
Oh, no! That would be quite intolerable!

STRAFOREL (*smiling*): Come, come! You know, young man?
PERCINET (*flinging at him the crumpled bill which he takes from his pocket*): Ah! Miserable!
'Twas thou!
STRAFOREL: Lord, yes! Per Baccho, it was me.
PERCINET: Met face to face! I'd seek this enemy
To the world's end!
STRAFOREL: You find me fat and hearty
As could have been expected of a party
You killed. The other men you slew are . . .
PERCINET (*rushing at him, sword in hand*): Thou shalt see!
STRAFOREL (*parrying with his arm, like a fencing master who is giving a lesson*): Hand high—foot well advanced. To be
Untaught, at your age! Time you were commencing!
(*With a turn of his wrist, he makes* PERCINET'S *sword fly out of his hand, and, returning it to him with a bow*):
What! Learned, so soon, the elements of fencing?
PERCINET (*frantic, taking up his sword*):
I'm gone! I won't be treated like a child!
I'll be avenged. I'm going to be wild!
Romance, affairs, duels, so fast shall come,
Don Juan, sir, shall turn over in his tomb!
I'll kidnap actresses! I'll have my fill. . .
(*He dashes out, brandishing his sword.*)
STRAFOREL: All very well, . . . but who will pay my bill? . . .

SCENE VII

STRAFOREL, BERGAMIN, PASQUINOT

STRAFOREL (*calling to* PERCINET, *who is out of sight*):
Hey, you, there! Stop! Here something else is shown.
(*Enter* BERGAMIN *and* PASQUINOT, *wigs off, coats torn, as if they had been in a fight.*)
PASQUINOT (*pulling down his vest, and handing* BERGAMIN *his wig*): Here's your peruke.
BERGAMIN (*out of breath*): Woof! Here, sir, is your own.

PASQUINOT: It must be plain that after this proceeding . . .
Here is your stock. . . .

BERGAMIN (*choking and wheezing*): It's time you were conceding
To live with you is too much sacrifice
Even for my son, sir . . . not at any price.

PASQUINOT (*seeing* SYLVETTE, *who comes in*):
My daughter! . . . Best not tell her right away!

SCENE VIII

The Same: SYLVETTE; *later,* BLAISE; *the* NOTARY, *Witnesses, Violins, and Guests*

SYLVETTE (*throwing her arms about her father's neck*):
Papa, I will not marry Percinet!
(*Enter the Witnesses and the* NOTARY, *in their Sunday best.*)

BERGAMIN: Notary! Witnesses! Plague take you!

WITNESSES (*aghast*): Hein?

NOTARY (*with official dignity*): This sounds . . .

STRAFOREL (*in the midst of the tumult, having picked up the bill* PERCINET *flung at him*):
My bill! You pay my bill! It's eighty pounds!
(*Enter the guests and three violins, playing a minuet.*)

BERGAMIN (*in a frenzy, hustling them out*): Violins! Devil fetch you!
(*The Violins automatically continue playing the minuet.*)

STRAFOREL (*impatient, to* BERGAMIN): My bill . . . before I go.

PASQUINOT (*together*): Speak to Bergamin.

BERGAMIN: Speak to Pasquinot.

STRAFOREL (*emphasizing the words of the bill, pointing them out one by one with his finger*):

STRAFOREL (*reading*): "Abduction to secure betrothal. . . . Rout
Of . . ."

BERGAMIN: They're un-betrothed. Aha, that let's me out!
I will not pay.

STRAFOREL (*to* PASQUINOT): But, sir . . .

PASQUINOT: Well, you are cool!
You think I'll pay a copper? You're a fool!
BERGAMIN (*to whom* BLAISE, *entering, has whispered something*):
My boy! He is gone!
SYLVETTE (*overwhelmed*): Gone!
STRAFOREL (*who has started back, stops and looks at her*):
Come, come!
BERGAMIN: Run! Stop my child!
(*He goes out, running, followed by the* NOTARY, *witnesses, and guests.*)
SYLVETTE (*trembling with emotion*): Gone!
STRAFOREL (*coming down, and watching her attentively*):
If those young things could be reconciled, . . .
Be brought again together. . . .
SYLVETTE (*suddenly furious*): Gone! He had
The heart to leave me!
(*She goes out, and* PASQUINOT *follows her.*)
STRAFOREL (*triumphantly*): Straforel, my lad,
To earn thy eighty pounds, beyond a doubt
This lovers' quarrel must be straightened out.
(*He goes off. The three Violins remain in the middle of the scene, still playing their minuet.*)

(*Curtain*)

ACT III

Same setting. One sees material for rebuilding the wall; the foundations are already laid. Sacks of plaster, wheelbarrows, hods, trowels.

When the curtain rises, a MASON *is discovered, at work; he is sitting on his heels, his back to the audience.*

BERGAMIN *and* PASQUINOT, *each on his own side, inspect the work.*

SCENE I

BERGAMIN; PASQUINOT; A MASON

THE MASON (*singing as he works*): Tra lai delu. . . .
BERGAMIN: Workmen are never quick!
THE MASON: Delurio . . . delu . . .
PASQUINOT (*watching every motion*): There goes a brick!
BERGAMIN (*same*): Pouf! Slap the mortar!
PASQUINOT: Paf! Goes the trowel!
THE MASON (*trilling*): Delurio delurio derowel . . .
PASQUINOT (*coming down*): Fine voice, but slow!
BERGAMIN (*coming down, aggressively cheerful*):
Fine sight for the beholder!
A good bit done!
PASQUINOT (*touching with his foot the rising wall*):
Before we're one day older
'Twill stand two feet above the turf! O rapture!
BERGAMIN (*also growing poetical*):
Dear wall, my eyes thy outline will recapture!
PASQUINOT: What did you say, sir?
BERGAMIN: Nothing. Not to you.
(*A pause.*) After your dinner, eh? What do you do?

PASQUINOT: Nothing. And you?
BERGAMIN: The same.
(*A pause. They bow and each paces up and down on his own side.*)
PASQUINOT (*stopping*): No news, sir, of your son?
BERGAMIN: Not any. Straying still.
PASQUINOT (*politely*): He soon will run,—
Thanks to the ladies,—out of money. Then
He will return.
BERGAMIN: Thank you.
(*They bow and promenade as before.*)
PASQUINOT (*stopping*): The wall again
Is rising, sir. I therefore will agree
To let you come sometimes to call.
BERGAMIN: May be
I will do you that honour.
PASQUINOT (*abruptly*): Ah, now, say,—
Come for a game of piquet?
BERGAMIN (*hemming and hawing*): Ah . . . oh . . . hey . . .
I don't know that I . . .
PASQUINOT: Come, since I invite.
BERGAMIN: Lord! Say, begs I besique!
PASQUINOT: Come on! All right!
BERGAMIN (*going out, behind him*):
You owe me tenpence from last time. . . . My choice!
(*Turning.*) Mason, work well!
MASON (*singing with all his might*): Tra la!
PASQUINOT: A charming voice!
(*They go out.*)

SCENE II

STRAFOREL; *later*, SYLVETTE

(*The moment they disappear, the* MASON *turns, takes off his hat; it is* STRAFOREL.)
STRAFOREL: I am the mason. Since the late event,
Not walls alone I'm seeking to cement.

(*He sits down on the low curbing made by the rebuilding.*)
Romance! Young fellows will pursue that fancy;
But one can guess, not needing necromancy,
He'll come back wiser. Yes, when youth's at large,
Life takes the youngster's discipline in charge.
A wholesome bath of fact meets those who roam.
Aye, Life will trim our little cockerel's comb.
He will return, trailing his wing a bit.
I, by a method parallel and fit,
Must cure Sylvette. It calls for all my arts,
But, Straforel, thou man of many parts,
Thou hast played marquis or prince or what may chance,
Been hissed in half the provinces of France!
This ought to serve.
(*He takes from his mason's smock a letter which he slips into a hollow tree.*)
If you knew all it meant,
You would be grateful, fathers.
(*Seeing* SYLVETTE, *who enters.*) My cement!
(*He picks up his hod and disappears behind the wall.*)
(SYLVETTE *appears, looking cautiously about her, then*):
No, no one!
(*She throws her veil on the bench at the Left.*)
Does my letter wait to-day?
An unknown gallant daily comes this way
And slips one in this lightning-riven tree,
Green mail box Nature painted just for me.
(*She puts her hand into the crevice in the tree.*)
Yes, faithful postman!
(*She reads.*) *"Sylvette, heart of marble,*
Hear the last love-song this hid bird shall warble,
From the cleft tree. Tigress, you make no sign,
Though daily letters tell you how I pine."
What style he has! *"Love is eternal strife."*
(*She nervously crumples the letter in her hand.*)
Ah, Mr. Percinet is seeing life,—
He claimed that right! Well, I will see it, too!

I won't stay here, with not a thing to do,
And bored to death. Would the Unknown, whose words
Come from the branches full of mating birds,
Could suddenly spring forth! Just as I stand,
—Not going for my hat,—I'd take his hand
And follow, follow! I must have Romance.
Appear, O Stranger! Even now perchance
I love him. Hands outstretched, I stand and say,
Come. . . .

STRAFOREL (*appearing, calls in a ringing voice*):
I am here!

SYLVETTE: Help! Help me, Percinet!
(*She retreats as* STRAFOREL *advances.*)
Man, don't come near me!

STRAFOREL (*emotionally*): Hostile! And so moved!
Yet I am he whose style you so approved,
A moment since! I am the favored mortal
Whose messages you sought at yon green portal,
He on whose love you count to take your hand
And lead you forth to some idyllic land!

SYLVETTE (*not knowing what to say, nor whither to turn*):
Man. . . .

STRAFOREL: You take me for the mason. Darling jest!
Exquisite! I am Marquis—'tis confessed—
Of Astafiorquercita, whose persistence
Still seeks to flavor a too flat existence
With deeds of daring, like an errant knight,
Ready to dream, make poetry, or fight.
I could not penetrate with rhyme or rowel
Your garden, Cold One,—so I took a trowel!
(*With a grandiose gesture, he flings his trowel away, and swiftly casting off his mason's smock, and doffing his hat, which is white with plaster, he appears in a glittering Almaviva costume, blonde peruke, conquering mustache.*)

SYLVETTE: My lord!

STRAFOREL: From one called Straforel I learned

Your history. Mad love within me burned
For the poor victim, innocent and tender,
Deceived so basely. Yearning to defend her. . . .

SYLVETTE: Marquis! . . .

STRAFOREL: Look not so like a startled ghost!
Of his base part the rascal dared to boast.
I killed him.

SYLVETTE: Killed him?

STRAFOREL: With a single whack!
I've always had the headsman's happy knack.

SYLVETTE: My lord . . .

STRAFOREL: I understand, heart dear and lonely,
You wish Romance, at any price and only.

SYLVETTE: But, Marquis!

STRAFOREL: 'Tis decreed. This night I take . . .

SYLVETTE: Oh, sir . . .

STRAFOREL: Carry you off for good!

SYLVETTE: Sir . . .

STRAFOREL: Do not awake,
Dream on, my heart! Sylvette consents! To-night
We take, together, our mad, glorious flight.
If your papa is crazed, delirious,
So much the worse!

SYLVETTE: Sir . . .

STRAFOREL: If they follow us,—
For they pursue elopers with severity—
So much the better!

SYLVETTE: But, my lord . . .

STRAFOREL: In verity,
So much the better! Pursuers left behind,
We'll bare our brows to rain,—to storm,—to wind.

SYLVETTE: Sir . . .

STRAFOREL: To gain a continent romantic, dark,
Incontinently, lady, we'll embark!

SYLVETTE: Sir . . .

STRAFOREL: In that land where lovers' paths converge,
Happy we'll go in sackcloth and in serge. . . .
SYLVETTE: Ah, but . . .
STRAFOREL: For I am penniless! I feel
You'd scorn a prosperous lover!
SYLVETTE: Y . . . yes!
STRAFOREL: Each meal
Shall be of bread . . . bread moistened by sweet tears.
SYLVETTE: Yet . . .
STRAFOREL: Exile brings us flowers instead of fears.
SYLVETTE: Sir . . .
STRAFOREL: Misfortune is our fortune. For our part,
No hearthstone,—but a tent-flap, and thy heart!
SYLVETTE: A tent? . . .
STRAFOREL: Four pegs, canvas, supporting bars,
Or, if you choose, Love,—nothing but the stars!
SYLVETTE: Oh, but . . .
STRAFOREL: What! Seized with sudden quaking?
Is it too far, this journey we are taking?
So be it! Hidden, dear Divinity,
We'll live alone, shunned by society!
Intoxicating thought!
SYLVETTE: Sir, you're misled . . .
STRAFOREL: People will pass us with averted head.
SYLVETTE: My God!
STRAFOREL: Conventions for the vulgar herd!
Happy, to be misprized by folks absurd!
SYLVETTE: O, sir . . .
STRAFOREL: No task shall carry me away,—
I'll tell my passion all the livelong day!
SYLVETTE: Sir . . .
STRAFOREL: We will live a life all poesy.
I shall have mad attacks of jealousy. . . .
SYLVETTE: O, sir . . .
STRAFOREL: When jealous, this you may rely on,
I'm a jackal,—a wolf,—a raging lion!
SYLVETTE (*falling, half fainting, on the bench*): Sir . . .

STRAFOREL: If you break our bond—Lo, I have said
Immediately you shall be massacred!
SYLVETTE: Sir . . .
STRAFOREL: Ha, you tremble?
SYLVETTE: Dear God, what a lesson!
STRAFOREL: Is blood, by Bacchus! your full veins' possession,
Or but a sound that murmurs? What is this?
Are you a common bread-and-butter miss?
Dare you attempt this dashing destiny?
Go I alone, or goest thou with me?
SYLVETTE: O, sir. . . .
STRAFOREL: I understand. My voice availed,
And you are strong. For the last time, you've quailed.
I'll come and seize you soon . . . upon my horse,
Across my saddle . . . ill at ease, of course!
But sedan chairs, though pretty and commodious,
Fit false abductions, and are therefore odious.
SYLVETTE: But, sir . . .
STRAFOREL (*going up*): Soon! . . .
SYLVETTE: Sir . . .
STRAFOREL: Soon! Ere the clock's next stroke!
I only go to seek a horse, a cloak. . . .
SYLVETTE (*beside herself with fright*): Sir!
STRAFOREL (*with a wide gesture*):
Still pursued, from land to land, we'll flee!
(*Coming down once more.*)
O yearning dreams! O sweet reality!
My soul to thy soul, "sister," shall repeat,
Soon, and forever!
SYLVETTE (*in a faint voice*): Forever!
STRAFOREL: Oh, how sweet!
You will live always with the cherished being
For whom you sighed without so much as seeing,
And who, not knowing you, for you could burn!
(*Before going out, he looks at* SYLVETTE *swooning on the bench, and says softly*):

Now, Master Percinet, you may return!
(*He goes out.*)

SCENE III

SYLVETTE (*alone, opening her eyes*):
O, sir . . . Marquis, . . . not cross the saddle, sir!
Have pity on me! I am not like her. . . .
Oh, not at all! Let me go home!
(*With a shudder.*) To-night!
I *am* a bread-and-butter miss. O, you are right!
He's gone! . . . Marquis! . . . Dear God! A dream!
. . . None spoke!
(*A pause. She recovers herself.*)
I'd *rather* be abducted in a joke!
(*She stands up.*)
Ah, well, Sylvette, my child, you've had your chance!
You called aloud, and loudly, for romance,
And romance came, and you were not content? . . .
The stars, the serge, the exile, and the tent! . . .
I don't want romance served me with a scoop.
Oh, just a taste, like bay leaves in the soup!
It is too much! I won't cross any oceans.
I'll be content with "sweet young girl" emotions.
(*The twilight makes vague, violet shadows on the lawn. She picks up the veil she has thrown on the bench and envelops her head and shoulders in its light folds, and dreamily*):
Who knows. . .
(PERCINET *appears. He is in rags. His arm in its tattered sleeve hangs limply at his side. A hat, with a soiled and broken plume, hides his face at first.*)

SCENE IV

PERCINET (*not yet seen by* SYLVETTE):
I have had no food since yesterday.
I reel with weariness. Pride? Manhood? Nay,

Silly intrigues such as all goodness censures!
They're not at all amusing,—wild adventures.
(*He sits down on the low wall; his hat falls off and* SYLVETTE *sees him.*)

SYLVETTE: You!
(*He starts up, trembling. She looks at him.*)
In such plight! Can it be?

PERCINET (*piteously*): Yes. It can.

SYLVETTE (*clasping her hands*): My God!

PERCINET: I look a little, don't I, like the man
The artist poses as The Prodigal?
(*He trembles.*)

SYLVETTE: But he can scarcely stand!

PERCINET: I'm tired—that's all.

SYLVETTE (*looking at his arm, with a cry*): Wounded!

PERCINET: You pity an ingrate? Can half . . .

SYLVETTE (*severe and distont*):
Fathers alone, sir, killed the fatted calf!
(PERCINET *makes a motion and the pain in his arm forces a wry face.*—SYLVETTE, *in spite of herself, distressed.*)
Nevertheless . . . that wound. . . .

PERCINET: Don't turn so white!
The wound is nothing. It will be all right.

SYLVETTE: Sir Vagabond, on great adventures set,
What did you do?

PERCINET: Nothing of good, Sylvette.
(*He coughs.*)

SYLVETTE: You cough?

PERCINET: We walked on ways adventurous
Night after night.

SYLVETTE: Night air *is* dangerous.
What funny clothes you have!

PERCINET: Some highwaymen
Took mine, Sylvette, and gave me theirs again.

SYLVETTE: Of course you found the fortune you were seeking?

PERCINET: Let's not indulge, Sylvette, in tactless speaking.

SYLVETTE: Of climbing ladders little would you reck,
To balconies?
PERCINET (*aside*): I nearly broke my neck.
SYLVETTE: You have memories of many a sweet success?
PERCINET (*aside*): I nearly smothered, hidden in a press.
SYLVETTE: You have won great wagers since your quest began?
PERCINET: Yes. (*Aside.*) Won a thrashing from a married man.
SYLVETTE: Guitar in hand, sung many a serenade?
PERCINET (*aside*): Learned to dodge duckings better than I played.
SYLVETTE: With a real sword-wound you have surely thrilled me.
PERCINET (*aside*): It would have served me right if it had killed me.
SYLVETTE: And you come home? . . .
PERCINET: Footsore, ashamed, in tatters.
SYLVETTE: But you found poetry? That's all that matters.
PERCINET: I went in search of what I left behind!
O, do not taunt me! I adore you!
SYLVETTE: Blind
To all our disillusionment?
PERCINET: Let be!
SYLVETTE: Our fathers did deceive us dreadfully!
PERCINET: No matter. Sunshine floods my heart! I rove
No more.
SYLVETTE: They feigned hate!
PERCINET: Did we two feign love?
SYLVETTE: The wall, a Guignol,—you said that to me!
PERCINET: I did, Sylvette,—but it was blasphemy.
At least, old wall, thy puppet stage, 'tis certain,
Has fresh green branches festooned for a curtain,
The park for centre, skyline for a frieze;
For hidden orchestra, the April breeze;
For properties, her blossoms every one;
Shakespeare for prompter, and for lights, the sun!
Like marionettes, on finger and on thumb,
Our fathers made the actors go and come,

But on that mimic stage this glory shines:
'Twas Love himself who spoke the puppets' lines!

SYLVETTE (*sighing*): But, oh, we thought we shared a guilty love!

PERCINET (*earnestly*): We did! That sweet remorse none can remove.
For our intentions were so bad we need
No proof to make us criminals indeed!

SYLVETTE (*uncertainly*): Is it so, truly?

PERCINET: Truly! Don't you see?
Our love, Sylvette, was really infamy.
I swear by all thy grace and loveliness,
Our love was wickedness, pure . . .

SYLVETTE (*sitting down beside him*): Wickedness?
(*Changing her tone and withdrawing a tiny bit*):
'Tis true . . . and yet . . . I still regret our glory,
For all our danger was a trumped-up story.

PERCINET: 'Twas real to us who thought so, on my oath!

SYLVETTE: No. My abduction and your duel, both,
Were false.

PERCINET: False, sweetheart, was your fear?
What passes in your soul has happened, dear.
To think yourself abducted, then, may be
Just as veracious as plain verity.

SYLVETTE: No, the dear memory is gone; wild lights,
Masks, mantles, music,—all the dazzling sights,
The charm, the combat. Oh, it is too cruel
To think it was all made by Straforel!

PERCINET: That Night of Spring, was that too made by him?
The feast of love, the cup of youth abrim,
April, who bade us eat and drink thereof?
Did he bestar the starry heaven above?
Did he make dusk that dimmed the rose-tree's line,
Till every rose seemed ghostly and divine,
Suspended in the air, mysterious, dim?
Gray mists, blue shadows, were they made by him?

His the sweet languors? Was he near or far
In the pink silver of the Evening Star?

SYLVETTE: No, surely. . . .

PERCINET: His deed, there were flowers a-plenty?
That it was Spring; that you and I were twenty;
And that we loved each other? O my dear,
There's all the magic.

SYLVETTE: All . . . 'tis true . . .

PERCINET: A tear?
Can you forgive the vagabond his crime?

SYLVETTE: O my poor dear, I've loved you all the time.

PERCINET: I see again thy brow, the curls that cling,
Thy fragrant youth, like the first breath of Spring,
One with, yet sweeter than, the wind-kissed clover.
No angel can claim kinship with thy lover!
(*He toys with* SYLVETTE'S *veil.*)
Oh, let me kiss thy veil's hem. 'Tis so blest
That on thy lovely forehead it can rest.
Ah, how this tissue cools my lips! O fool,
That left this muslin veil, so sweet, so cool,
Forsaking this for silks and velvets drabbled.

SYLVETTE: What silks? What velvets?

PERCINET (*hastily*): Nothing! Oh, I babbled!
My little girl in dotted muslin, pray
Let me but touch . . .

SYLVETTE: It's linon, Percinet.

PERCINET (*kneeling*): Trembling, I bend to kiss it, yet I feel
My lips might soil it, knowing as I kneel,

O airy linon,
Soft enfolding her,
All bliss to win, on
Holding her;

Ah, linon airy,
Fragrant, fragile thing,
Did some good fairy
Lend her wing:

Ah, airy linon,
  Scarce the evening dew
Dares to begin on
  Starring you;

Ah, linon airy,
  Lightly shelter her,
Dear Virgin Mary
  Gossamer.

O airy linon,
  Light as maiden fancy,
To weave and spin on
  Necromancy;

Ah, linon airy,
  Floating flame of snow,
Fancies vary;
  Love must grow.

O airy linon,
  Her counterpart,
White rose to pin on
  My sweetheart.

SYLVETTE (*in his arms*): See, poetry is in the hearts of lovers;
  Not in adventures only, nor for rovers.
PERCINET: 'Tis true; for my adventures were authentic,
  And, O Sylvette, they weren't at all poetic. . . .
SYLVETTE: And those our crafty fathers made arise,
  They were poetic, though they were just lies.
PERCINET: They built the framework, but our spirits know
  On a false trellis still true flowers may grow.
SYLVETTE: Poetry, love, but we were crazy, dear,
  To seek it elsewhere. It was always here!
  (STRAFOREL *appears, conducting the two fathers, and shows them* SYLVETTE *and* PERCINET *in each other's arms.*)

SCENE V

The same. STRAFOREL; BERGAMIN; PASQUINOT

STRAFOREL: They're re-betrothed! . . .
BERGAMIN: My son!
STRAFOREL: So pay my bill.
PASQUINOT (*to his daughter*): Thou lovest him anew?
SYLVETTE: Yes.
PASQUINOT: Flighty still!
STRAFOREL (*to* BERGAMIN): Do I get my money?
BERGAMIN: That you do, my master.
SYLVETTE (*startled, trembling*):
That voice . . . it is—it is—Marquis of Asta. . . .
STRAFOREL (*bowing*): Fiorquercita? It was I, dear Miss,
I, Straforel. Forgive my zeal in this.
There's this advantage, surely, in my venture;
—You missed the hardships of a real adventure.
Romantic life, as I have let you know it,
With its real pangs, you willingly forego it.
Doubtless you could . . .
(*He indicates* PERCINET) like this young citizen,
Have seen real life, but girls aren't just like men,
The course might be a little rough to go,
So I devised a magic lantern show.
PERCINET: What's this?
SYLVETTE (*hastily*): Nothing. I love thee! . . .
BERGAMIN (*pointing to the half-built wall*): Let it fall
To-morrow, with one blow, that rising wall!
PASQUINOT: Dividing walls are wholly reprehensible.
STRAFOREL: No, build the wall. The wall is indispensable!
SYLVETTE (*gathering all the actors around her*):
And now we four and Master Straforel
Make for an Epilogue a rare rondel.
(*She comes down to the audience.*)
SYLVETTE: Dainty dresses and rippling rhymes,
And Love, with flute and dart and bow. . . .

BERGAMIN: Flowery foolishness, all five know. . . .
PASQUINOT: Sudden tempests . . . but stilled betimes. . . .
STRAFOREL: Ringing rowels and clanging chimes,
A good, kind bravo abroad doth go. . . .
SYLVETTE: Dainty dresses and rippling rhymes,
And Love with flute and dart and bow. . . .
PERCINET: Home, a harbor from hateful times;
A little music, a scene Watteau,
A pretty playlet, not long nor slow;
Sires,—lovers,—a wall where sweet-brier climbs. . . .
SYLVETTE (*with a curtsey*): Dainty dresses and rippling rhymes.

(*Curtain*)

THE PRINCESS FAR AWAY

A Play in Four Acts

In Verse

TO

MADAM SARAH BERNHARDT

May I not dedicate this Play.

—E. ROSTAND.

THE PRINCESS FAR AWAY

LIST OF CHARACTERS

MELISSINDE, *Princess of the East, Countess of Tripoli.*
BERTRAND OF ALLAMANON, *Chevalier and Provencial Troubadour.*
JOFFROY RUDEL, *Prince of Blaye, Troubadour of Aquitaine.*
FRA TROPHIMUS, *Chaplain to the Prince.*
ERASMUS, *his Physician.*
SQUARCIAFICO, *Genoese Merchant.*
THE CHEVALIER IN EMERALD MAIL, *adventurer in the service of Emperor Manuel Comnenus.*
SORISMONDE, *Maid of Honour to Melissinde.*
THE MASTER *of the Ship.*
TROBALDO.
FRANCOIS, PEGOFAT, BRUNO, BISTAGNE, *Sailors.*
JUAN, *the Portingalais.*
MARRIAS, *of Aigues Mortes.*
THE PILOT.
THE FIRST PILGRIM.
SECOND PILGRIM.
THIRD PILGRIM.
FOURTH PILGRIM.
FIFTH PILGRIM.
NICOLOSE, *Servant to Squarciafico.*
A Cabin Boy, Sailors, Musicians, and Slaves.

XII CENTURY

FIRST ACT

The deck of a ship which has evidently had a long and terrible voyage. One sees that there have been tempests; sails are tattered, yards broken, rigging tangled; a mended mainmast leans perilously.

One sees that there has been a battle; bloodstains; scattered weapons.

Night is waning. Gray, translucent shadows; a paling sky.

Stars that disappear. A violet sea, in wreaths of mist. An horizon lost in fog.

During the Act, insensibly Light comes.

SCENE I

THE MARINERS: BRUNO, BISTAGNE, MARRIAS, PEGOFAT, TROBALDO, FRANCOIS, *etc.; the* PILOT; *later, the* COXSWAIN, *and* FRA TROPHIMUS.

(*When the curtain rises one may see lying or sitting in every position, Mariners with tragic faces and of ghastly appearance; pale, fleshless; they seem overwhelmed with weariness and privation. Some of them bear wounds, which have been rudely bound up with rags. Two of their number, in the background, near the deck-rail, balance between them, by feet and head, a third, inert.*)

THE TWO MARINERS, PEGOFAT *and* BRUNO (*in the background*):

One . . . two . . . three!

(*They heave the body over the rail. One hears a thud as it strikes the water.*)

PEGOFAT: Done!

BRUNO: Another mate at sea,
Who will not ride thy roadstead, Tripoli!

PEGOFAT (*taking off his bonnet to the vanished comrade*):

Good-bye, lad.

BRUNO (*looking out to sea*): Soon the dawn. The East shines redly.

FRANCOIS (*waking and stretching*): Who was thrown overboard?

BRUNO: Audriu the Deadly.

FRANCOIS: Accursed fever!

(*He looks at the devastation about him.*)

Waves have hit her hard.

BISTAGNE (*raising his head*): Aye, and the wind. Sheets torn away.

BRUNO: And yard!

FRANCOIS: The mast leans, parlous. Better were it cleft.

BISTAGNE: Oh, I want food!

BRUNO: Naught in the hold is left.

FRANCOIS (*trying to stand*): Ai! Ai! . . . my wound!

(*He reels.*) Ho! One can scarcely stand.

If we should meet a new barbarian band

We would lack fighting men.

BRUNO: We would not lack!

We must arrive! Nothing can hold us back!

Ill, ill shall fare the sloop that would delay.

BISTAGNE: When shall we sail the Sarracenic Bay?

THE PILOT: Soon, as I hope. The sea has been full wroth!

O for the needle that can tell the North,

The stone one rubs it with!

BISTAGNE (*shrugging his shoulders*): A silly fable!

THE PILOT: Nay, they exist, . . . in gourds, to keep them stable.

One rubs; the iron is enamoured of the stone;

The needle turns due North. The thing is known.

ALL THE MARINERS: Ha-ha! He is daft! A needle! Hear him tell!

PEGOFAT: Forget the needle! Row our cockle shell!

Hold! . . . Our woes end! The weather is less curst.

BRUNO: Woes end, eh? Does our hunger?

FRANCOIS: And our thirst?

THE DREAM IS THE SOUL'S ONE STAR-

BISTAGNE: Aye, we have suffered!
PEGOFAT: Heaven will hear our call.
TROBALDO (*appearing astride a yard*): But what if she were ugly after all?
ALL THE MARINERS: Oh, no! She is beautiful! She is!
TROBALDO: Now by our Lord,
She needs must be, Bistagne!
BISTAGNE: And, by my word,
More than a little! For our voyage is full
Of hardships!
BRUNO: So, She must be beautiful!
ALL: She is! She is!
MARRIAS: I am sure!
A ROWER: It must be so!
'Tis not to reach a monster that I row!
PEGOFAT (*laughing*): Rowing, he thinks of Her!
THE ROWER: The night long, yes!
BISTAGNE: Be calm. She's always pretty,—a princess!
THE PILOT (*shrugging his shoulders*): Your talk is all of her.
PEGOFAT: One is so weary;
Lo, speak of Her, and one is almost cheery!
THE PILOT: Will she be shown to you, this Faire Ladye?
BRUNO: The Prince has promised it. Our eyes shall see;
If we arrive through all these boisterous seas,
He'll tell her we have brought him to her knees.
THE PILOT: Think you she'll have a word for rovers rough?
PEGOFAT: No. We shall see her. That is meed enough.
Oh, she is sung through all of Christendom.
A CABIN BOY: Her eyes . . .
THE PILOT (*turning to him*): Thou wouldst see her eyes?
THE CABIN BOY: That's why I've come.
PEGOFAT: The Master!
(*The Skipper has entered and has been listening for a moment.*)
THE MASTER: It behooves us first t' arrive,
And that Joffroy Rudel, our Prince, survive!

THE MARINERS: It yet goes ill? Alas! Poor Prince!
BRUNO: Woe's me!
THE MASTER: They keep the castle always closed, ye see;
Watched by his friends, belike he's slumbering.
PEGOFAT: He sang at sundown.
BISTAGNE: Troth, a wondrous thing,
How easily he makes his lover's lays.
FRANCOIS: What do you call that thing whereon he plays?
THE PILOT (*with a learned air*): 'Tis called a lyre.
FRANCOIS: A lyre? Our Lady knows
It has a pretty sound.
BISTAGNE: Helps when one rows!
PEGOFAT: When sails are spread, it gives them breath, that lyre!
THE COXSWAIN: Our Liege's almoner!
PEGOFAT: Hist! Yes, the Friar!
(FRA TROPHIMUS, *his gown mended and full of threadbare places and holes, leaves the Prince's cabin, looks at the sky, and kneels in the background.*)
BRUNO: An easy priest!
FRANCOIS: Simple, and brave beside.
BISTAGNE: I would all Brothers cut their sleeves as wide!
THE MASTER: The lanthorns of the sky grow dim. There stirs
A breath . . .
BISTAGNE: Dawn comes . . .
FRA TROPHIMUS (*kneeling*): Virgin of mariners,
Who makest the fierce sea gentle in the dawn,
Guide thou our ship to port like some great swan;
And, Lady, if he live, our Sire Rudel
Vows to Tortosa's shrine, thy grace to tell,
A ship like this that brought us to those shores,—
A silver ship with helm and sails and oars.
THE PILOT: Pouh! All that . . . huh! Had I that needle . . .
BISTAGNE: Beast
In any case, he does no harm, that priest!
(ERASMUS *comes out in his turn. His doctor's robe in rags;*

he wears no wig; his expression is piteous. The sailors chuckle.)

BRUNO: Now our physician shows again his phiz.
FRANCOIS: The medico!
BISTAGNE: Weak . . .
TROBALDO (*shrugging his shoulders*): As his physic is.

SCENE II

FRA TROPHIMUS; ERASMUS; THE MARINERS *in the background.*

FRA TROPHIMUS (*going to* ERASMUS): Master, the sick man?
ERASMUS: Always worse. He sleeps,
While Messire Bertrand constant vigil keeps.
(*Looking toward the horizon*)
Fra Trophimus, the best one can discern, ah?
Is fog?
(*Furiously*) I, I, physician of Salerna,
What do I mid such perils? Answer, thou.
—My school my books, my hearth, where are they now?
The sea winds tear my robe. If sails grow big,
Those same gusts ravish from me every wig!
FRA TROPHIMUS: The prince? . . .
ERASMUS: Prince of all triflers born,
Why need he set forth on a quest forlorn?
I joined the prince's household,—but when he,
Gentle and feeble, yet lived tranquilly;—
Beneath a roof, sir, not beneath a mast.
I find this voyage bitter, first and last.
(*He paces the deck, with increasing rage.*)
Now may hell roast and may the devil impale
The cursed pilgrims who first brought the tale!
Coming from Antioch; they reached the palace
At evening as we supped. By Satan's malice!
—Th' equerry carved a turkey, knife in hand—
They were the first who told of Melissinde!
They sang, with zeal wholly importunate,

This child of Hodierne and Raymond the Great;
Deliriously they sang this flower of Asia;—
One rolling eye is printed past erasure
Upon my brain. Neither to hold nor bind,
The prince, this poet, son of shade and wind,
Uprising straight, proclaimed her for his She.
He serves her since with all fidelity;
Two years, exalting her in speech and song,
His frame grew weaker as his love grew strong.
At last,—set sail, knowing his end was near,
Lest he see Death, not having seen his dear!

FRA TROPHIMUS: Master Erasmus . . .

ERASMUS: Foam will be his shroud!
And Sir Bertrand, when all men disallowed,
All those about Rudel,—this crazy thing,
He praised his love, approved his offering,
Avowed this venture very fair and fit
And must embark, bearing his share in it!
And you, a priest, shipped with this crazy horde!
One comprehends how I could be on board,
But you, the prince's almoner, I charge
Have nonne business on this fatal barge.
Your master's the sole son of chivalry
Who seeks not Syria 'neath the Cross. Not he!
Light love songs to the lute tell all his soul!
The Holy Sepulchre is not his goal!

FRA TROPHIMUS: Who knows God's secret end, His hid design?

ERASMUS: We seek a lady's eyes, in Palestine.

FRA TROPHIMUS: Be sure the Lord has pleasure in this thing.

ERASMUS: What can the Lord gain? Tell me!

FRA TROPHIMUS: Everything.

ERASMUS: Oh!

FRA TROPHIMUS: For He gains all, or so I understand,
By any deed disinterested, grand.
Not less His own than the Crusade will prove,
Or so I think, this beautiful, pure love.

ERASMUS: You'd liken then this rash adventure, sir,
To rescue of the Holy Sepulchre?
FRA TROPHIMUS: Is His desire just that His tomb be free?
Were that His very care, resistlessly
He'd drive the infidel,—believe this thing,—
Forth on the great sweep of an angel's wing.
But no. He wanted to set free His own,
Who lived, proud, idle, drowsy and alone,
Selfish, lukewarm, the slaves of circumstances,
And set them splendid, singing, midst the lances,
Drunk with devotion, glad to die in deed,
In self-forgetfulness, the soul's chief need!
ERASMUS: So, what the Prince does for his ladye's dole? . . .
FRA TROPHIMUS: Is very wholesome for the Prince's soul.
For it was dead in him, gay, idle, roving;
It wakes within him, suffering, willing, loving.
By such means comes, I think th' important part—
That in man's body beat an ardent heart.
The prince's lesser life had hemmed him round;
By petty vices petty courts are bound.
Doubt not, his quest obeys more worthy laws.
All true love's travail serves High Heaven's cause.
ERASMUS: Mayhap . . .
FRA TROPHIMUS (*lowering his voice*): Look only! Rowers in their banks,
The mariners,—what were they? Reckless ranks
Of fighting seamen. Let your mind speak true.
It was a pirate ship, a robber crew!
But they were hired, as oft thou knowst it fares,
—Travellers to the Levant must hire Corsairs,—
To take him to his Princess far away.
What time the Captain signed the pact, I say
Her name was less than nothing to these rovers.
Behold, now, all the sailors are her lovers!
ERASMUS: You are pleased?
FRA TROPHIMUS: Enchanted! An ennobled galley

Makes, not for hire, but for a dream, this sally.
They hope to see Her when their task is done,
And their ferocities drop one by one;—
The Prince's Lady, Lady of all those;
One ends by loving that toward which one rows!
They'd have the Prince attain his heart's desire.
His love enchants them, thing of wind and fire.
For, mark you, little spirits love the grand
And feel the force they cannot understand.
This noble folly which none comprehends
Shines out, all clear, to these his simple friends.

ERASMUS: The pilot thinks the Prince is lunatic.

FRA TROPHIMUS: Less simple, he.

ERASMUS: What good? What? There I stick.

FRA TROPHIMUS: Much. For each ray of the ideal that enters
Man's soul wrest ground from evil at its centres.
Each noble aim a nobler aim will bear.
No dream gives place to any dream less fair.
The heart, expanding, has more room for truth.
The words I speak astonish you, in sooth?
I'm partisan of all adventure high.
What were the Argonauts, our ship being nigh?
This epic-lyric ship? Ah, ever faster
Urge on, its sails song-filled, a poet master,
With starving pirates, who will not rebel,
To a pure, beautiful, far damozel,
Having no other hope than this emprise,
To see Her for one moment, ere he dies.
Master, indifference is the soul's one chasm
And the sole virtue . . .

ERASMUS: What?

FRA TROPHIMUS: Enthusiasm!
(*He goes back.*)

ERASMUS: Ho—hum! It's droll at least, and it may be . . .
(*After reflection*) That Friar will be tried for heresy.

(BERTRAND, *whose garments, like the others, are in rags, comes from the ship's castle.*)

BERTRAND (*to* ERASMUS): The Prince awakes.

ERASMUS: Sir, you do well to tell me.

(*He re-enters the cabin.*)

SCENE III

FRA TROPHIMUS; BERTRAND; THE MARINERS

THE MASTER (*to* PEGOFAT, *who has dropped his oar*): Row, then!

PEGOFAT: Three days, I've rowed with nothing in my belly.
I can no more.

BRUNO (*his voice rattling in his throat*): I thirst! I . . .

FRA TROPHIMUS (*to* BERTRAND): My son, it is heart-warming
Thy love for our poor Prince. Thy heart is charming.

BERTRAND: My heart is weak. It has no barriers grim.
A hero passes and I follow him!
Were I Provençal, were I troubadour,
Seeing such love, if I did not adore?
(*To the sailors*)
Courage, my lads! Advance, and still advance!
(*To* FRA TROPHIMUS)
I never knew contentment in Provence.
I ate my heart out, playing games with words
Chiselled like gems, or made to fly like birds.
I tired of life whose gravest task was naught,—
Polish a thumb nail, juggle with a thought.
Some use at last my light life may evince.

FRA TROPHIMUS: Brave heart, thy care for this our dying Prince . . .

BERTRAND: I am a poet. All this love I show him
May be but the seduction of a poem.

FRA TROPHIMUS: What matter? Thou wert brave. Son, it is ill,
If thou dost nobly, to deny it still!

BERTRAND: My holy friend, thy praise constraineth me,
For in my heart is strange diversity!
Capable . . . yes . . . of action, of devotion,
Still at the mercy of each new emotion.
It frights me, Father, that I left the rest
So easily for this alluring quest.
Less quick to good, mayhap to ill more slow!
Praise not the moods that toss me to and fro.
I am a poet.

A MARINER (*lying prone while the* MASTER *tries to make him get up*): I can no more!

THE MASTER (*to* BERTRAND): Messire,
To light new courage, kindle you the fire.
(*The mariners drag themselves toward* BERTRAND.)

PEGOFAT: I starve, Sir Bertrand. Tell me of her hair.

BRUNO: My lord, I thirst. Her lovely eyes declare.

FRANCOIS: Thou hast so often during our distress
Told us the beauty of the far Princess!
(*They are all about him, foredone, supplicating.*)

BERTRAND: Oh, well, good seamen, I declare
In one more song the magic deep;
The sun laughs in her yellow hair,
And in her eyes the moonbeams sleep.

If her sweet features be displayed,
Between the fountain of her tresses,
All lovers then are renegade,
Forsaken all mistresses.

I know not what of secret grace
Is hers alone and wholly hers,
—Grace of the saints, which yet has space
For grace of sorcerers.

Her air is gentle, subtle, light;
Her charm, compounded of all powers;
Her voice, a fountain in its flight;
Her attitudes, all flowers.

Such in her loveliness is She,
The French maid who is Moabite,
Fair Melissinde of Tripoli,
In her great palace built of light.

Such is the Princess we shall see,
If it be sooth the pilgrims tell
Who wander still from sea to sea
With tinkling shallop shell:

(*During these verses, the mariners, one at a time, and little by little, rise, refreshed.*)

PEGOFAT: Hein? How he talks! Can't make it out in full,
But it is plain that She is beautiful.
BRUNO: I am better.
(*They all go to work.*)
FRANCOIS (*rowing*): Hardily!
THE PILOT: Fools, by my word!
This comes of having troubadours aboard.
BERTRAND: Rudel and I, thou sayst, make madmen thus?
Yet if they labour on, 'tis grace to us.
Aboard each ship, if waves and wreckage strow it,
One needs, before a pilot's self, a poet.
PEGOFAT (*jeering at the* PILOT): Above all, when the pilot loves to shift.
BERTRAND: When will the mist upon the water lift?
THE COXSWAIN: Wait for the sun.
BRUNO (*pointing to the* PILOT): He rages!
THE PILOT: Huh! There might be some reliance
Had I my needle!
PEGOFAT: Oh, a fig for science!
It wouldn't tell you much. To know the North
Would not drive weariness and sickness forth.
BRUNO: It wouldn't make the victuals everlasting.
FRANCOIS: Or make a sailor drunk while he was fasting.
BISTAGNE: Nor show the homesick men their native skies.

TROBALDO: Nor make appear before their dazzled eyes
The fabled country full of plenteousness.
PEGOFAT: Nor tell them any more of the Princess.
FRA TROPHIMUS: They bring the Prince.
(JOFFROY RUDEL, *his face terribly emaciated, his body lost, so thin it is, in his worn robes, is carried on a pallet. He is wracked with fever and his eyes shine unnaturally.*)
BERTRAND: Ye rowers, set her flying!
JOFFROY RUDEL (*in feeble voice*):
As we draw near, I feel the more I am dying.

SCENE IV

The Same. JOFFROY RUDEL

JOFFROY: Day, I salute thee as thou dost appear! . . .
Ere thou hast died, shall I have seen my Dear?
O honied name, O Princess of the East,
O Melissinde! An Emperor has not ceased
To woo thee from his proud Constantinople.
Betwixt us lies the ocean green and opal.
O Flower supreme of glorious Baldwin's blood,
Ah, shall I not behold, beyond its flood,
Its golden sands, its silver tides complaining,
That happy Tripoli where thou art reigning?
Only the fog builds, 'gainst the horizon pale,
A cloudy city. Prison, floating gaol,
Am I to die not having even breathed
The wind of hope that round her shores has wreathed?
Alas! nor recognize across the seas
The fragrant breath of Moab's myrtle trees?
PILOT: Wait! By the Lord, the fog less sullen seems!
JOFFROY: To see her ere I die! Then death, and dreams!
PEGOFAT: You'll see her.
JOFFROY: Grace, rude voice with valiant chime!
What ails me? God! Despair? For the first time
Shall I despair, to-day? O dear my Lady!
My soul would fly! Rowers, row fast and steady!

BRUNO: You'll see her.

JOFFROY: Bistagne, Pegofat, Bruno,
Francois, the Victualler, Calker Trobaldo,
Ye who have suffered pains of every sort
For me,—Juan Portingalais, Marrias of Aigues-Mortes,
Grimoart, . . . Luke, . . . grace, and grace to all the rest.

PEGOFAT: Let be. We're proud. This voyage is our best.

BRUNO: An illustrious voyage!

FRANCOIS: So I hold!

JOFFROY: Ah, yes; you bear not Cæsar and his gold,
But Rudel and his love illustrious.

FRA TROPHIMUS (*approaching*): Hope on, my son.

JOFFROY (*smiling faintly*): Greeting, Saint Trophimus!
(*Turning to* ERASMUS.)
Lacking your robe and wig and such disguise,
Doctor, I love to see you look less wise.

ERASMUS: Monseigneur . . .

JOFFROY (*holding out his hand*): Ah, no offense!
(*To* BERTRAND) Draw near, sweet friend,
Generous to follow to my journey's end.
Brother more brotherly than flesh and blood.
All thought me mad; you shared my every mood!
Ah, I must die afar. My sun is set.

BERTRAND: Regret it not. . . .

JOFFROY: Nay, I have no regret!
Hearth, kindred, emerald Aquitaine, Oh, nay!
Dying, I love my Princess far away.

ERASMUS: The cause of all our ills.

JOFFROY: Most blest is She.
I love great hopes, dreams of infinity.
Nothing I envy save Icarus' fate.
His flight to like high goal I'd emulate.
Falling like him, I'll praise with my last breath
The love that brought so beautiful a death!

ERASMUS: This passion is a thesis hard to prove.
—What man knows not, how is a man to love?
JOFFROY: Nay, to a heart impatient, nobly planned,
That is not love which lies too close at hand.
(*He lifts himself on his pallet.*)
Have I in vain ta'en pilgrim's pouch and scarp,
Taken the staff in vain? Still to my harp,
Though each faint breath the air more faintly stir,
Though I see not, I'll die still singing her.
(*He takes the harp that hangs from the head of his pallet and touches its strings.*)
I hesitate, I muse, I touch each string.
For the last time I sing. What shall I sing?
O verses that first sought my love to tell,
Be thou my song in dying. Sing, Rudel!
(*He recites, accompanying himself.*)

It is common everywhere
To sigh, true love to bear,
To an auburn, dark or fair
Mistress.
Eyes hazel or brown or gray
Love's pains with a smile repay.
I—I love the far away
Princess!

Less lovely by far is this;
—Though faithful one wait for bliss,—
The hem of her gown to kiss,
One day;
A touch that would scarcely mar;
A hand clasp she would not bar. . . .
I, I love the Princess far
Away!

'Tis love supremely proved
To love though not beloved,

To love for aye, unmoved,
Nathless.
A love that no doubts dismay,
More noble if vain, I say.
And I love the far away
Princess!

For, Love, thou art divinest
When for a dream thou pinest,
When through a mist thou shinest,
Sweet ray.
For the dream is the soul's one star.
Life is what its visions are.
And I love the Princess far
Away!

(*He falls back, exhausted.*)
I am foredone! Alas, my fingers quiver
And lose the chords! Tears like a sudden river
Smother my voice. It fails! O Melissinde,
Perchance, forever fails, for hope. . . .

A VOICE (*high in the shrouds*): Land! Land!

(*Mad tumult.* JOFFROY *springs up, standing on his couch, his arms outstretched.*)

MARRIAS: Yes, look!
BRUNO: It's true! Land! Land!
FRANCOIS: Noel! Row, still!
BISTAGNE: The fog hid all!
JUAN: A golden land!
TROBALDO: A hill
Of violet!
PEGOFAT: Tripoli!
BRUNO (*running about like a crazy man*): Be calm!
FRANCOIS: Land! Tripoli!
MARRIAS: Ho! I can see a palm!
BISTAGNE: Not yet!

FRANCOIS: Yes, many palms!
TROBALDO: A halcyon!
PEGOFAT: Sand like a lion's pelt beneath the sun!
THE PILOT: Aye, Tripoli! My reckonings were right.
Lo! The slim bushes! Long walls gleaming white!
ALL: Praise to the pilot!
PEGOFAT: Look, 'neath the morning glow
The town is red!
BRUNO: Oh, that pink bird!
FRANCOIS: Aye, 'tis a flamingo!
BISTAGNE: Let's all embrace.
TROBALDO: Let's sing!
PEGOFAT: O sight to bless!
TROBALDO: Land!
JUAN: Land!
PEGOFAT: Tripoli!
JOFFROY: The Princess!
(*He falls fainting into* BERTRAND'S *arms.*)
THE COXSWAIN: Now cast the anchors out!
BERTRAND (*who, aided by* ERASMUS *and* FRA TROPHIMUS, *has gently laid* RUDEL *on his pallet*): O, he is dying!
Ah, we must land!
THE COXSWAIN: No, no! No use in trying!
The ship's a shell! Sharp reefs along this slope.
A scratch would sink her. We must lower the rope.
They'll send feluccas soon to take us off.
BERTRAND: His eyes
Are closed!
(*To* ERASMUS, *who bends above the Prince.*)
He breathes? . . .
ERASMUS: A little. I cannot disguise,
The Prince is very weak.
BERTRAND: We can't delay!
JOFFROY: Thou speakst too loud. I hear the thing you say . . .
—Beside, I knew. I die. I will not drift!
Take me to land! Be swift! Be very swift!

Let me not die like Moses! Spare this pain!
Let me not see the Promised Land in vain!

BERTRAND (*low, to* ERASMUS): Could he be moved?

ERASMUS: Not to be thought of, sir!

JOFFROY (*struggling*): I want to see her!

ERASMUS (*holding a phial to him*): Prince, you must not stir.
Drink this. And rest. And then, . . .

JOFFROY (*to* BERTRAND): Hear what I say . . .
O Bertrand, carry me cost what it may!
And if I perish, thou shalt not regret.
I'll die attaining where my heart is set.
I am a man. Speak truth. I shall not wince.
Would I die ere I reached her?

ERASMUS: Yes, my Prince.

JOFFROY: O Bertrand, help me!

ERASMUS: But, if you will yield,
Rest, without speaking, calm, you will be healed
And you will see the Lady you desire. . . .

JOFFROY: O, the physician must be still the liar!
Bertrand, I want to see her.

BERTRAND: Thou shalt see her!

JOFFROY: How?

BERTRAND: I say, thou shalt behold her! 'Tis my vow!
I'll see her, tell her, bring her here to thee.

JOFFROY: Bertrand!

BERTRAND: Denial were inhumanity.
Yea, she will come before the daylight dies.
I'll tell her of thy love and thy emprise. . . .

JOFFROY: Bertrand!

BERTRAND: Of a French poet so possessed
With love of her,—tempests and Turks oppressed;
Yet still, like pilgrims of the Cross who leave
All else behind, you sought her.

JOFFROY: You believe? . . .

BERTRAND: That she will come! I know it! 'Tis my charge!
Quick ho! Find for me boat . . . felucca . . . barge . . .

Ah, the ship's skiff! That's it! O friendly shores,
Ye hold her answer! And she comes!
(*To the sailors.*) The oars!
Myself will row. The passage is not wide.
Be patient, Prince. Thou'lt see her at thy side!

JOFFROY: O Bertrand, if thou dost that!

BERTRAND: Yea! I will.
Will she or nil she, I will fetch her still!

JOFFROY: If only to her presence thou attain! . . .
Seeing you so accoutred, canst thou gain
An entrance, past the guard? . . .

BERTRAND: True! . . .
(*To a sailor.*) In yon shell,
Place thou my coffer—jewels—arms! Work well!

JOFFROY: Attend . . . and join this casket to thy coffer,—
My dearest joyaunces. . . . To thee I offer
My clasp, my collar, and my spurs of gold,
Envoy of Poet-Lover, . . . manifold
Greater than King's Ambassador, go splendidly!
Speed! Let naught stay thee!

THE COXSWAIN (*to* BERTRAND): You will need, may be,
A guide. They say the palace lies afar;
Now, since you cannot enter as you are,
At the first house, ask for a guide. No doubt
Your host will offer. Dress. And sally out.

JOFFROY: Bid her come swiftly. Else I cannot stay.

ERASMUS: Prince, if you talk, your strength will ebb away.

JOFFROY: I will be silent. . . .
(*To* BERTRAND.) Listen . . .

BERTRAND: Nay, thou must repose.

JOFFROY: Move her, . . . be eloquent—embroider—gloze!
Nay, tell her rather, on plain sooth relying,
That I adore her, tell her I am dying,
And, dying, sing her, my all-beauteous one,
As cicadas in dying sing the sun;

That ere he die, her lover will know heaven
If for two years of love, two moments be but given.

BERTRAND: Yes, yes; be still.

JOFFROY: I am silent. . . . Not—I adore her—
Nor—all I said—when first you come before her.
Thou must prepare her. . . . I am still, I hush. . . .
Look you—couldst thou recite, at that first blush,
The verses that I sang, but now. My passion
Thou couldst not tell in any fitter fashion,
May be? . . .

BERTRAND: Ah, hush! Fear naught. And I will tell
Thy love in those thy words.

JOFFROY: Thou'lt sing them well?

BERTRAND (*with forced gaiety*):
If I stressed one amiss, catastrophe!
I'll chant each strophe well and tenderly.

JOFFROY: Once more thy arms about me I would feel!
(*They clasp each other in a long embrace.*)

FRA TROPHIMUS: Throughout thy embassy, in prayer I'll kneel.

ERASMUS (*low, to* BERTRAND):
The Prince may last two days. No mortal power
Can tell. Or he may die this evening, or this hour.

THE MASTER (*also whispering*):
Sir, if he die while you are in the Gulf.
We'll hoist the signal rovers call the Wolf,
The black sail which we Corsairs after dark
Fly, when a white sail were too fair a mark.

FRA TROPHIMUS (*going down with* BERTRAND):
Ah, bid her come! Fail not to bring her back!
Insist! Persist!

BERTRAND (*pointing*): Till yon white sail is black!
(*He leaps over the deck rail and lowers himself into the boat. One hears the noise of chains.*)

JOFFROY: Now bear my pallet closer to the rail.
I know that she will come.

Voice of BERTRAND (*from below*): She will not fail!
I do engage. Be quiet!
JOFFROY: Tender warning!
Yea, he will bring her. Oh, the golden morning.
The barque glides on . . . pink waves upon its wake.
Ah, if Bertrand engage for true love's sake! . . .
BRUNO: She will come!
FRANCOIS: We'll see her!
PEGOFAT: On our boat! Our shell!
TROBALDO: Hard by!
(*As he disappears calling after* BERTRAND): Good luck!
The Princess! Bring her soon!
Plead well!
JOFFROY: The bark speeds on! The smooth sea gently rocks!
Fainter the oars sound, grating in the locks.
. . . Leave me, alone. Here I will meet my fate.
Lo, I am whist. . . . I watch the sea . . . I wait.

(*Curtain*)

SECOND ACT

The hall of a Palace, whose luxury is half Romanic, half Oriental. At the back a great window of stained glass opens on the terraces, beyond which the sea seems to meet the sky.

Right, second entrance, a great open door permits a glimpse of a retreating gallery, with slender columns and sparkling fountains. Left, a stairway of porphyry ascends to a heavy door of gold. The glittering marble floor and the steps of this stairway are both strewn with lilies freshly gathered. A divan is heaped with cushions. Hung upon the wall near the door an enormous battle axe whose enamelled hilt is embossed with green uncut gems.

SCENE I

The Pilgrims

(*When the curtain rises, the great window is closed. A group of pilgrims, wearing the pilgrims' gown with border of shallop shells; each having in his hand a staff and a long green palm branch. They stand in the foreground. The pilgrims talk in whispers, like men dazzled and over-awed by what they see.*)

First Pilgrim: The dame who met us does not reappear.

Second Pilgrim: Silence so perfect that a man can hear
The rustle of the lilies in the hall.

Third Pilgrim: 'Sh! . . . Listen! No . . . only the fountains' fall.

Fourth Pilgrim: All sense of place from me is wholly driven.
We've crossed how many halls and galleries?

First Pilgrim: Seven.

Second Pilgrim: What strange mosaics!

Third Pilgrim: Sumptuous drolleries!
Those golden birds in jewelled voleries!

FOURTH PILGRIM: Carpets for feet; cushions to rest the back!
SECOND PILGRIM (*to* THIRD): Hast seen the grim colossus?
THIRD PILGRIM: Aye, alack!
He who so stared at us? I could not fail.
FIRST PILGRIM: 'Sh! 'Tis the Chevalier in Emerald Mail.
Foreign adventurer. . . .
(*At this moment, one sees pass along the gallery a knight of mighty stature, whose armour is enamelled with green.*)
SECOND PILGRIM (*to the* FIRST, *whispering, and nudging with his elbow*): Whist! . . . Behind you—but in sight.
THIRD PILGRIM (*in a low voice, covertly staring at* THE CHEVALIER): The circlet of his casque is chrysolite.
FOURTH PILGRIM: On his glaive's hilt, see how the emeralds blaze!
(THE CHEVALIER *disappears.*)
SECOND PILGRIM (*shivering*): I do not like this phantom's prowling ways.
FIRST PILGRIM (*taking up his interrupted story*):
This Chevalier, magnificent and cruel,
Here represents the Emperor Manuel,
Affianced to the Princess. . . .
SECOND PILGRIM: Then, that rumor
Is true? She weds him?
FIRST PILGRIM: He's of jealous humour.
Knowing this marriage is affair of state,
Byzantium's Cæsar fears a power more great.
Lest Love should conquer the Most Lovely One,
That warrior watches her from sun to sun.
The way is barred to youths. He guards her snugly.
At least. . . .
THIRD PILGRIM: But I am young.
FIRST PILGRIM: —They must be ugly.
FOURTH PILGRIM: He must be strong as . . .
FIRST PILGRIM: All the powers of evil!
(*Indicating the battle axe on the wall.*)
No man can lift his battle axe.

SECOND PILGRIM: The devil!
That comely youth who, late, upon the strand
Leapt from his skiff, impetuous, to land,
Calling upon the Moors and Genoese
To take him to the Princess, courts not ease.
THIRD PILGRIM: Madly he cried, not Beelzebub could bend
His will nor bar his way! He'd gain his end!
—I think he's one who'll do the thing he planned.
(*A moment before in the doorway leading to the gallery,* THE CHEVALIER *has reappeared. At the last word, he makes a gesture and moves away very swiftly. At the sound, the Pilgrims turn.*)
FIRST PILGRIM: He heard!
SECOND PILGRIM: He has gone to issue some command
To bar the way 'gainst our Unknown.
FIRST PILGRIM (*to* SECOND PILGRIM): Old fool!
You talked too much.
THIRD PILGRIM: Ah! Bah! We can keep cool.
The youth went, first, to furbish up his arms,
With that old Genoese. Spare thy alarms!
Squarciafico, merchant shrewd, will know
The peril; very cunningly, will show
Means to outwit it. He fears the Emperor's laws,
And will befriend his rival, for good cause.
FIRST PILGRIM: Accord of viol and of lute aloft!
The lady comes who first received us. . . . Soft!

SCENE II

The aforementioned; SORISMONDE; *later,* MELISSINDE

SORISMONDE (*appearing at the head of the stairway*):
Pilgrims, who fare to-morrow to fair France,
I have told the Princess of the circumstance
That led you here, from Antioch or Tyre;
That sight of her was your supreme desire.
FIRST PILGRIM: Her image lured through all our errantry.

SORISMONDE: The Princess learned, and not indifferently,
Of this, the hope that led you here, I ween;
She, graciously, will let herself be seen.
She hears her morning Mass. . . . Ere long, nathless . . .
(*A bell, sounding above.*)
The Mass is said. She is coming!

A HERALD: The Princess!

(*The golden door swings open.* MELISSINDE *appears. She wears a heavy cope, weighted with gems. Her brow is bound with pearls. Children attend her, carrying sheaves of lilies.*)

FIRST PILGRIM: 'Tis She!

SECOND PILGRIM: What grace beyond our outmost dreams!

THIRD PILGRIM: Here, a great pearl and there, a lily gleams!

FOURTH PILGRIM: The tales told true. She is so beautiful
Lilies are dimmed and India's pearls are dull!

FIRST PILGRIM: She's like to Helen of whom the old tale spoke!

MELISSINDE (*high on the stairs*):
So you will soon see France, ye happy folk!
So you believe your bark will soon advance
Through a blue mist to lovely, blue Provence!
I envy you. I am like to these, my flowers.
We blossom, both, 'neath skies that are not ours.
Lacking the homeland where true souls are plighted,
We seem to blossom, feeling we are blighted.
(*She comes down a few steps.*)
Ye will behold the very sun of home.
I love a land whither I may not come:
And have regret,—who have not memory. . . .
(*She comes down the last steps and comes among the Pilgrims.*)
Already, Christian Pilgrims, fittingly
Each has his palm ere parting.
(*Taking the lilies from the children's hands.*)
If 'tis meet,
Let each join to his palm a lily sweet,

Bearing this reliquary to Provence,
—Frail token of an exiled maid of France.
(*She distributes the lilies among them.*)

A PILGRIM: The Palm will tell the pains the Flower effaces,—
The desert,—and thy beauty, its oasis!

SECOND PILGRIM: The Palm will speak of many a toilsome mile;
The Lily tell us of a fairy's smile!

THIRD PILGRIM: Farewell, Princess! A lily is thy face!

FOURTH PILGRIM: A lily's self, in graciousness and grace!
(*The Pilgrims retire, one by one.*)

MELISSINDE: Farewell!
(*The Pilgrims go out; one hears them as they pass below the great open window. The children have put the remaining lilies in a great sheaf on a table; and they renew on the marble pavement the flowers which the Pilgrims' feet have stirred or crushed.*)

VOICES OF THE PILGRIMS (*below the window*): Noel! Noel!
(MELISSINDE, *with a gesture of farewell, closes the window and comes down. The children go out.*)

SCENE III

MELISSINDE; SORISMONDE

SORISMONDE: What fine amenity,
What condescension! . . . The divinity
Was kind to-day with a new prettiness.

MELISSINDE: Thou knowest I am kind for idleness!
(*She nervously unclasps her mantle.*)
Mantle, embroidered, gemmed, thou crushest me
With beryl, corindon, chalcedony,
Jaspers and garnets from Assyria brought,
With senseless pebbles, riches good for naught;
O mantle, mass 'neath which I, pallid, bow,
O sumptuous mantle, emblem fit art thou
Of that still heavier weight, unseen of all,
Which I must bear. . . .

(*She lets her cope slip from her shoulders to the floor.*)
when I have let thee fall!
(*She emerges, sheathed in white.* SORISMONDE *picks up the mantle. She hands her the crown as well.*)
Take my pearls, also! Take my whole disguise!
Ouf!
(*With a few lilies quickly plucked from the sheaf, she decks her hair.*)
See, I am coiffed in fairer, fitter guise,
With these my flowers which night's pearls still caress.
(*Throwing herself in the great chair.*)
Thou knowest I am kind for idleness!
(*An interval of silence.*)
Is it for idleness that I am kind?
Nay, 'tis self interest. I seek to bind
The palmers' hearts with lilies as with thongs.

SORISMONDE: What, Madam, do you hope from them?

MELISSINDE: Their songs!
Grace to the pilgrims' songs,—'tis so one hears,—
I am to-day the dearest of all dears,
Loved of Joffroy Rudel the Troubadour,
As never maiden hath been loved afore!
Yes, this my poet, troubadour of France,
Kindled to love at breath of their romance!
Thou knowest how my lonely heart is lit
By this bright love whose rays have stolen to it;
How necessary has become that love,
Piercing the straitened round wherein I move.
(*With a gesture, she indicates the window.*)
Ah, well, these pilgrims, having paid their vow,
Returned to France, will sing my eyes, my brow;
Enkindling dreams in hearts of youths afar.

SORISMONDE: And Rudel know it! That's the way we are!

MELISSINDE: Perhaps, ah, truly, Prince Rudel will hear.
By this device my heart, in exile here,

Can hold sweet converse 'cross the sea's vast waste
With my true lover.

SORISMONDE: 'Tis a fashion chaste.

MELISSINDE: I would exalt in him alway the pride
So to adore me. 'Twas this hope supplied
The palmers with my lilies as they wended
Toward France. It was my legend that I tended!

SORISMONDE: Again to this vain dreaming you succumb!
I'd love Rudel . . . but he would have to come!

MELISSINDE: I love his love; I love his soul; I love . . .

SORISMONDE: I cannot understand. If you could move
Some sorcerer's magic ring and make to pass
His face before you in a crystal glass . . .

MELISSINDE: Thou'dst have all things too clear.

SORISMONDE: Too misty, thou.
There's no such ring mid all thy gems, I trow
Thy spirit wanders in sweet errantry.

MELISSINDE: Yes, in my garden gleaming mistily,
I hear the wind in myrtle trees repining;
I sail o'er Syrtes' waters supple, shining,
Where my proud galley, carven, gold-bedight,
Mirrors its flowers by day, its gleams, by night,
And my soft lute, buoyed by the plectrum's chords,
Inspires my verses and the wave accords.
Or in these halls, in solitude's completeness,
My soul grows sad,—and sorrow has its sweetness!
Here where my lilies press, on pave and plinth,
My dream leads through a misty labyrinth;
Little by little, leads to paths supernal;
Reason sleeps in the tinkle sempiternal,
In the tinkle sempiternal of the water in the vases.

SORISMONDE: Oh, we need casques and spurs to clear these mazes!
We need young chevaliers and mirth and chaff.
Your dreadful guardian keeps them far. . . . You laugh!
This man is placed near you that none may win

The palace Treasure, guarded by the Djinn.
Since he has come, no hand knocks at our portal!

MELISSINDE (*laughing*): A guard of honor, scare-crow for a mortal!

SORISMONDE: The Emperor is jealous.

MELISSINDE (*shrugging her shoulders*): And would screen us?

SORISMONDE (*sitting down on a cushion at her feet*):
And truly, will you wed him, this Comnenus?

MELISSINDE: Why not? A consort's not a lover, certainly.

SORISMONDE: You find him tiresome?

MELISSINDE: Oh, imperially.

SORISMONDE: This Turk will never know you.

MELISSINDE: Sorismonde,
One who knows not,—who will not go beyond
The shallow surface,—to that spouse I'm vowed!
I told him, once, my mood. He laughed aloud!
Ah, well, I'll find,—'tis oft the woman's role,—
Ironic pleasure in my unguessed soul.
Could better choice than Manuel be above her
Who wills to keep an incorporeal lover?

SORISMONDE: But if, some day, a lover veritable,
Glutton, should come to thy heart's empty table?

MELISSINDE: My Love Invisible my heart would cover.

SORISMONDE: For guardian angel, lo, a guardian lover.

MELISSINDE: He seems so near, at evening, on the beach
When thoughts sweep in as though a dream had speech,
That to the breeze cry, "I give you grace."

SORISMONDE: You owe this poet nothing?

MELISSINDE: Yes, my praise
Is due him; for my scruples, pride and cares,
Heart stirrings, shadowy hopes half unawares,
Delicate trembling, rush of tears that frees
Some hidden impulse, new nobilities,—
The whiteness of my robes;—all are his dole.
In some dim way, to him I owe my soul!

SORISMONDE (*shaking her head*): And for those things you cry,
"I give you grace?"
I fear this love.
MELISSINDE: I, too, in diverse ways . . .
It is too calm. . . .
(*She rises.*) A storm weighs on the air.
I suffocate. . . .
(SORISMONDE *seeks to remove the sheaf of lilies lying on the table.*) Nay, leave my lilies there.
SORISMONDE: Your lilies hem you in, your dreams redoubling.
Lilies are pale and proud. Lilies are troubling.
MELISSINDE: Perchance thou'rt right. Flowers foreign and afar,
Can ye be false, who angels' sceptres are?
With thyrses luminous as seraphim?
Cloudy their perfume hangs, like incense dim.
(*She lifts the sheaf of lilies and gazes at it.*)
Perchance thou'rt right and these be evil flowers.
I touch them, trembling, drawn by ghostly powers;
Their lonely pride chills a more lonely one;
And laughter loves red roses in the sun.
(*Breathing in their fragrance.*)
Ah, this perfume! My brow bends to its chrism.
Is it perverse, its subtle mysticism?
(*With forced gaiety.*)
So be it! Let us live, play, be at ease!
I've bid my merchant come, the Genoese,
Squarciafico, he who ever brings
Pale silks, cut jewels, curious, lovely things.
It whiles away long hours; to look; to choose;
On colours and designs and fabrics muse.
SORISMONDE: This wily Genoese displays his ware
And you see not, your heart being otherwhere,
What he extorts from you by guileful play
For all the merchants' quarter, day by day. . . .
Right dear to thieves are beauty-loving princes.

The whole bazaar uneasiness evinces
Lest at thy marriage, they be all deposed,—
Princess with open hand and eyelids closed!
"Her marriage," say they, "puts a wall between us."
They know what master waits them in Comnenus!

A LADY-IN-WAITING (*entering*):
The Chevalier in Emerald Mail seeks room
And audience of the Princess.

MELISSINDE (*shrugging her shoulders*): Let him come.

SCENE IV

MELISSINDE, SORISMONDE, THE CHEVALIER IN EMERALD MAIL

THE CHEVALIER (*he has a preoccupied air and looks often toward the gallery or the great window*):
Princess, forgive me that I so retard
Coming for your commands. God be your guard.

MELISSINDE (*smiling*): Is it not rather you who guard me, sir?

THE CHEVALIER: Madam . . .

MELISSINDE: I know. It is your fashion to demur.
But . . . my commands? . . . I'd sail upon the bay.

THE CHEVALIER: 'Tis well.

MELISSINDE: My ship's in festival array,
Flowers, music?

THE CHEVALIER (*gallantly*): Madam, it is always so.

MELISSINDE: In that case, I fare forth at once.
(*To* SORISMONDE.) Swift. Go!
Fetch me a veil. . . .

THE CHEVALIER (*hurriedly*): Oh, not at once!
(MELISSINDE *gives a start of surprise.*)
Madame . . .
I act because I must. In truth I am
Plunged in despair. This journey must delay.

MELISSINDE: Hein? What means this?

THE CHEVALIER: Not long. Till close of day.

MELISSINDE: Then it was true?
THE CHEVALIER: Alas! I am but fief
To my liege lord,—oath-bounden to my chief.
For this one day I must redouble . . .
MELISSINDE (*quickly*): Why?
THE CHEVALIER: Forgive me. . . . I have set armed men hard by
To guard the palace doors. But I prefer
Myself to guard this last.
MELISSINDE: A prisoner!
SORISMONDE (*at the window*):
Heavens! Armed slaves surround us everywhere!
MELISSINDE: My men? . . .
THE CHEVALIER: Imprisoned, by my watchful care,
(*Showing the gallery.*)
Just for an hour. Since here *I* watch, not one
Can have your orders, Madam.
MELISSINDE: Featly done!
I am a chatelaine enchanted, losing
Her power at a wand's touch. . . . It is amusing;
A romance, Sorismonde. . . . But what has come?
Why this strange act?
THE CHEVALIER (*bowing*): Princess, I must be dumb!
(*He goes back, then stops, before going out.*)
I had forgot. This merchant who lends gold,
The Genoese, more Jewish than a Jew, old. . . .
MELISSINDE: Squarciafico!
THE CHEVALIER: I may advise
Admitting, if you wish his merchandise.
MELISSINDE: Truly? You condescend so far? You will
Permit my seeing Squarciafico still? . . .
THE CHEVALIER: Yes, Madam. I shall watch his every glance.
(*He goes out.*)
SORISMONDE: Charming,—to wed the Emperor of Byzance!
MELISSINDE: But what has chanced?

SCENE V

MELISSINDE; SORISMONDE; SQUARCIAFICO, *followed by his servant* NICHOLOSE, *who carries bales of merchandise.* THE CHEVALIER IN EMERALD MAIL, *arms folded, on the threshold.*

SQUARCIAFICO (*obsequious, voluble, and watching* THE CHEVALIER *out of the corner of his eyes*):
Fairer she always proves!
More beautiful, that smile of all the Loves!
(*To his servant, who opens the bales and caskets.*)
Nicholose, all our wares. Dispose them fairly.
(*To* MELISSINDE, *with an obeisance.*)
Princess, these beauteous things will please you rarely!

MELISSINDE: You still grow richer?

SQUARCIAFICO: Jesus! I am poor!

MELISSINDE: Old liar! You are rich, like all Genoa.
You, who seek gold in Palestine the blest,
Should wear, not cross, but sequins, on your breast!
Enriched by the Crusade! Fi! All men scoff it.

SQUARCIAFICO: The glory is the Franks'!

MELISSINDE: And yours the profit?

SQUARCIAFICO: Nay, all goes ill, despite our Patron George.
Tolls, everywhere, Princess! They feed, they gorge!
Our mills, our ovens, have been confiscated.
(*Slyly.*) You'll give them back?

MELISSINDE: We'll see.

SQUARCIAFICO (*showing his bags*): Sacks freighted
With perfumes exquisite.
(*Unrolling a carpet.*) A Persian woof.
(*Tapping the rug impressively.*)
Ascalon gives, in honest trade's behoof,
To the Genoese, a hundred byzants yearly.
(*Slyly.*) Does Tripoli hold commerce, then, less dearly?

MELISSINDE: We'll see.

SQUARCIAFICO (*displaying a little chest*): You like this?

MELISSINDE: It is beautiful.
SQUARCIAFICO: Pearls of the Gulf; gold tissue of Mossoul!
Myrrh of Arabia . . . ivory, African. . . .
(*Low.*) 'Sh! I've a secret. Listen, as you can.
(MELISSINDE *starts.* *Aloud*): Splendid brocade . . .
(*Low.*) A young man roams . . .
(*Aloud.*) Prismatic . . .
(*Low.*) Without the palace . . .
MELISSINDE (*aside*): I see all!
SQUARCIAFICO (*aloud*): Aromatic!
(*Low.*) Forbidden to enter . . .
(*Aloud.*) Amber. . . . Pray admire!
(*Low.*) He seeks an audience. . . .
(*Aloud.*) Tapistry of Tyre!
MELISSINDE (*low*): His name?
SQUARCIAFICO (*low*): I know not. . . . Poet, I surmise.
MELISSINDE (*with a little cry which she checks immediately*):
Ah! . . . Ah, that scarlet! It delights the eyes!
SQUARCIAFICO (*low*): By stratagem can you not bring him in?
MELISSINDE (*low*): But no!
SQUARCIAFICO: Linen of Egypt, wondrous fine and thin.
MELISSINDE (*low*): Whence comes he?
SQUARCIAFICO (*low*): France! Out of a boat he springs,
Fair as Greek shepherds, prouder than all kings . . .
This guardian never takes himself afar? . . .
(*Aloud.*) These spices come from Kiss-Ben-Omira.
MELISSINDE (*low*): The dragon of the myths, who ne'er relents.
SQUARCIAFICO (*aloud*): The Axumites ruler gave me this incense.
(*Low.*) This young man said his audience must be won.
To see you, he would fight, five score to one!
MELISSINDE (*low*): Then . . .
SQUARCIAFICO (*aloud*): Calamus!
(*Low.*) If, when he winds his horn,
None answer his appeal, he will set on!

(*Aloud.*) Balm of Arabia, . . . potent balm and good.
Placed on a wound, it staunches flowing blood!
(*Rising and offering her a little sack.*)
And last, from far Provence, for teeth pearl white
Blanched filberts make a morsel of delight.

MELISSINDE: 'Tis well. Enough. I buy all. Leave me, thou.
(*Aside.*) Meseems, without, I almost hear him now!

SQUARCIAFICO (*folding his fabrics*):
The next load that I bring will be the best.
(*At an impatient gesture from* MELISSINDE.)
I'm going. . . .
(*Slyly.*) You will have the tolls suppressed?

MELISSINDE: Yes.

SQUARCIAFICO (*low*): Comely as Paris! 'Tis a dizziness
To see him.
(*Aloud, craftily*): You'll grant the subsidy?

MELISSINDE: Ah, yes!

SQUARCIAFICO (*to himself*): I knew I'd struck the trail when I began
To aid the fortunes of this fair young man!
He, he! This should dishearten Manuel.
(*He turns on the threshold before going out, and, with a profound bow*): 'Tis said! A hundred byzants annual!
(THE CHEVALIER *stalks out behind him.*)

SCENE VI

MELISSINDE, SORISMONDE; *later* THE CHEVALIER IN EMERALD MAIL

MELISSINDE (*to* SORISMONDE): Hast thou heard all?
(SORISMONDE *makes a gesture of assent.*) A youth! A poet! Oh!

SORISMONDE: You are perturbed!

MELISSINDE: Perturbed? I? Surely no!

SORISMONDE (*teasingly*): You are less wearied than an hour agone?

MELISSINDE (*throwing herself on the divan*):
Why not? Ah, don't say silly things!
(*One hears the winding of a horn without.*)
The horn!
SORISMONDE (*at the great window*):
'Tis he! The challenge! He winds his horn! 'Tis he!
MELISSINDE (*lying stretched on the couch; indifferently*):
What matters it?
SORISMONDE: He's personable to see!
MELISSINDE (*shrugging her shoulders*): How can you see so far?
SORISMONDE: I see him plain.
He calls! And armed men sally forth amain!
At the first portal, now!
MELISSINDE: What's that to mortal?
(*An interval*)
Ah, well, what does he at the farthest portal?
SORISMONDE: The Emperor's men at arms won't let him through.
MELISSINDE: Poor callow youth! He turns?
SORISMONDE: He fights!
MELISSINDE (*sitting up*): Is't true?
SORISMONDE: He hurls them back! He's past! O Virgin blest!
I see him! To the second gate he has pressed!
He fights! He fights!
MELISSINDE (*rising*): Is it true?
SORISMONDE: O courage grand!
(*The horn sounds nearer.*)
Hark how he winds his horn!
MELISSINDE (*standing*): Like to Roland!
SORISMONDE: He will pass!
MELISSINDE (*at the window, behind her*): He comes!
SORISMONDE: He falls!
MELISSINDE: He is restored!
SORISMONDE: His lance is broken!
MELISSINDE: He has seized his sword!
Ah!
(*She shrinks back.*)

SORISMONDE: What is it?
MELISSINDE: Oh, his eyes! I met his eyes!
He raised them and he saw me!
SORISMONDE: His emprise
Is like a tourney. Throw him, then, your sleeve!
MELISSINDE (*going to the window, tears off her sleeve and holds it high*):
Sir Knight, strike hard! My favour white receive!
I charge you, change its colour! Heed my prayers;
Defend your blood! And dye my sleeve with theirs.
This silver samite, back to me you'll bear it,
But not till 'tis encarnadined!
(*She throws the sleeve.*)
VOICE OF BERTRAND: I swear it!
(*Tumult and clash of steel, then silence.*)
MELISSINDE (*coming down*): He's gained the palace.
(SORISMONDE *closes the window. Silence.*)
Deathly silence fell . . .
Silent. . . . What did he wish to say?
SORISMONDE (*pointing to the gallery*): Look!
(*A slave enters the gallery. He is covered with blood; his vestments in ribbons. He speaks to* THE CHEVALIER.)
THE CHEVALIER: 'Tis well.
(*He takes his battle axe from the wall, and to* MELISSINDE, *with cold formality*) Princess, I close the door,—with your permission.
(*He shuts it. One hears the bolts shoot home.*)
MELISSINDE: Ah, what will fall? How dreadful is the vision!
(*One hears a noise in the palace, a noise that comes nearer and nearer.*)
He comes! . . . The Chevalier in Emerald Mail
Will kill him, with that axe swung like a flail!
Poor youth! . . . With such a brute he cannot battle!
(*Sound of footsteps, close to the door. Then, ring of steel.*)

Ah, they engage! . . . How long it is! . . . Hark! Rattle
Of steel on steel!
(*A dull, heavy sound.*)
A fall!
(*Silence again. Then the door is opened. She shrinks back.*)
The bolt reverses! . . .
(BERTRAND *appears on the threshold, sword in hand; wounded in the forehead; he throws at* MELISSINDE'S *feet the ensanguined sleeve.*)

MELISSINDE (*still retreating*): Sir Knight, what would you say to me?

BERTRAND: Some verses.

SCENE VII

MELISSINDE; BERTRAND; SORISMONDE

BERTRAND (*falling on one knee*):

It is common everywhere
To sigh, true love to bear,
To an auburn, dark or fair
Mistress.
Eyes hazel or brown or gray
Love's pains with a smile repay.
I, I love the far away
Princess!

Less lovely by far is this;—
Though faithful one wait for bliss,—
The hem of her gown to kiss
One day;
A touch that would scarcery mar!
A hand-clasp she would not bar. . . .
I, I love the Princess far
Away!

MELISSINDE (*continuing*):

'Tis love supremely provéd
To love though not belovéd
To love, for aye, unmovéd,
Nathless!
A love that no doubts dismay,
More noble if vain, I say,
And I love the far away
Princess!

For, Love, thou art divinest
When for a dream thou pinest,
When through a mist thou shinest,
Sweet ray.
For the dream is the soul's one star.
Life is what its visions are.
And I love the Princess far
Away!

BERTRAND: You know these words?
MELISSINDE: From more than one minstrel.
BERTRAND: And whose they are?
MELISSINDE: Yes,—Prince Joffroy Rudel.
BERTRAND: And this strange love has won so great a boon?
MELISSINDE: Ah, tell me of that love. 'Tis opportune!
BERTRAND: You know the constancy, the fervent zeal
Of this great love?
MELISSINDE: I love this love! . . . I feel,
Sometimes, when soft tides whisper on the strand,
This love walks close beside me on the sand;
In the blue stillness of the dusk I move
And feel the very essence of this love! . . .
BERTRAND: Heaven!
(*He trembles.*)
MELISSINDE (*bending above him*): You are happy?
BERTRAND: Happy . . . for, eftsoons . . .
I'll bring. . . . The blood ebbs . . . I . . . I . . .

MELISSINDE: God! He swoons!
Sorismonde!

SORISMONDE (*running*): Wait! He must lie prostrate . . . So!
(*Together they lay him gently on some cushions.*)

MELISSINDE: Oh, run! Fetch water! Ah, the cruise! Quick, ho!

SORISMONDE (*bringing the ewer and kneeling with* MELISSINDE *beside* BERTRAND): Beautiful as a god, . . . but deathly pale!

MELISSINDE: His brow bleeds! Linen! Wait! I have . . .
(*She tears the scarf from about her throat.*)

SORISMONDE: Your veil!

MELISSINDE: 'Tis naught! . . . His heart beats, 'neath his ciclatoun!
The balm of Araby! It is . . . Ah, run! . . .
All potent, said he! Oh! we must determine . . .
Nay, do not mar with stains his doublet's ermine, . . .
Not to recover him by two swift chance.
—He wears the curly locks of fair Provence!
Ah, see! A little red dawns in his cheek!
His eyelids flutter! And he tries to speak!
He clasps my hand . . .

SORISMONDE: He is better. See, he tries . . .

MELISSINDE: His eyelids lift. He opens wide his eyes!

BERTRAND (*opening his eyes and seeing* MELISSINDE):
I dream . . . I'm Flore. And Blanchefleur is she.
Or else . . . I have been wounded mortally,
And wake with angels in God's paradise.

MELISSINDE: Hearest thou, Sorismonde?

SORISMONDE: Better! I told no lies!

BERTRAND (*his head on* MELISSINDE'S *arm, whence the sleeve has been torn*):
I recall naught . . . I, weak? Could man believe it?
. . . This arm against my cheek . . .
(MELISSINDE *moves*) O, leave it!

MELISSINDE: I will leave it.

BERTRAND: O burning coolness of this arm so fair,
Of this unknown, bare arm!
MELISSINDE (*quickly withdrawing her arm*): True! It is bare!
BERTRAND (*making an effort to rise, to* MELISSINDE):
But who art thou?
MELISSINDE: Sir Knight, you know full well,
I am she for who you had some word to tell,
But you have swooned. It brought forgetfulness.
BERTRAND (*starting back*): But you are not the Princess?
MELISSINDE (*smiling*): Certes, yes!
BERTRAND: You, . . . but then! . . . you, the Princess! . . .
Oh, Alas!
And I! . . . Great God! . . . The precious hours pass!
Oh, haste!
(*He tries to rush to the window, but totters.*)
Open the window! Look, and tell me plain!
(MELISSINDE *opens the great window that opens toward the sea.*)
What do you see?
MELISSINDE: Terrace, flower-strewn . . .
BERTRAND: Beyond? Ah, look again!
MELISSINDE: The sea.
BERTRAND: And there . . . Great God, what may betide! . . .
See you a Frankish ship at anchor ride?
MELISSINDE: A little, battered ship, still far away,
Anchored—I saw no ship there yesterday.
BERTRAND: And high upon the mast?
MELISSINDE: A swallow clings!
BERTRAND: No black sail at the yards?
MELISSINDE: Nay, halcyon wings,
Wide spread, white wings!
BERTRAND: There still is time! My fear
Was false! O lady, haste! O Virgin, hear!
Prolong his life! He is so faint, so fond!
He would die so content!

MELISSINDE: Look, Sorismonde,
His splendid eyes are full of desperate tears!
BERTRAND: He would die so content! For she appears
The flower of flowers, the star beyond all stars,
The dream beyond the dream!
Griefs, hazards, wars,
His bitter pains were clean forgot I trow,
If he behold the whiteness of her brow,—
If he behold, beneath the tawny lashes
The blue eyes, that are gray, where emerald flashes!
See her who long, not seeing, he has served!
—Well might he worship, at all cost, unswerved!
—Alas, they dare not carry him to shore!
Come! Let a dying man see and adore;
Let his last moments know new ecstasies!
On your sweet image let him close his eyes!
Do not recoil with haughty mien, I pray!
Be not again the Princess far away!
Princess, to whom a honied name is given,
Come, that, ere dying, he may enter Heaven.
Come that he have, on his ship miserable,
Of deaths the sweetest . . . the most enviable!
MELISSINDE (*who retreats as he advances*):
Of what man do you speak?
BERTRAND: Joffroy Rudel,
Whose last hour is at hand,—whose love I tell,—
Whose love you said you loved! Be expedite!
He dies! And I have promised!
MELISSINDE: But, Sir Knight,
Who, then, are you?
BERTRAND: Bertrand of Allamanon, know,
His friend and brother! Ah, come quickly!
MELISSINDE: No!

(*Curtain*)

THIRD ACT

Same setting as the Second Act. In the background, the great window is open. It is afternoon, sparkling and brilliant. The marble pavement is strewn not with lilies but with red roses.

SCENE I

BERTRAND; SORISMONDE

SORISMONDE: I told her you would see her, at all cost.
Will she, or no? . . . She hesitates, doubt-tossed.
Hope still.
BERTRAND: Time presses so!
SORISMONDE (*shaking her head and going toward the casement*):
A strange emprise!
BERTRAND (*in a dull voice*): The sail?
SORISMONDE: Still white from the masthead it flies.
Lo, at the gate below, black robed and pale,
Folk of the Chevalier with Emerald Mail!
His household takes its leave. His galley's oars
Beat dully the bright waters of our shores.
When, with a bloody corpse for chief, they come,
Bringing that ship to proud Byzantium,
And mourning janissaries tell that tale,
The Emperor's rage will make the stoutest quail!
BERTRAND (*sunk in reverie*):
All suddenly, so hard her sweet eyes gleamed.
This harsh refusal! Why?
(*To* SORISMONDE) To you it seemed
As strange?
SORISMONDE (*with an evasive gesture*): Ah!
BERTRAND: Why did she refuse? I beg you . . .
SORISMONDE (*seeing the golden door open*): She!

BERTRAND: Entreat her!

SORISMONDE (*making him go out*): Haste! Here, by this gallery!

(MELISSINDE *appears and slowly, listlessly descends the stairs.*)

SCENE II

MELISSINDE; SORISMONDE

MELISSINDE: Sorismonde, damsel, come, and tell me true
What has my strange behaviour meant to you?

SORISMONDE (*with a vague gesture*): Ah!

MELISSINDE: Why this refusal? Why this gust of wrath?
Did the storm stir me . . . as so oft it hath?
I have burned a candle. I have said a prayer.
But . . . this refusal took me, unaware.
Was it pettishness? or did I so resent
Such a deception? . . . Tell me what it meant.
Certes, it lacked a reason. That you know.

SORISMONDE: You know there is a reason.

MELISSINDE (*terrified*): Ah! Speak low!

SORISMONDE (*smiling, after a pause*):
Be reassured, 'Tis this that I devine:
That which was dear, which dreams had made divine,
You feared to see,—most natural recoil,—
In very flesh and marred by pain and moil.
His eyes are haggard. Purple are his lips;
Fevered the clammy hand that feebly grips.
You wished to keep, through all the days to be,
A noble love in noble memory,
No funest vision, boding, new, unknown.

MELISSINDE: Gramercy! 'Tis the reason! That, alone!
Yes, the sole reason for my No. Haste, thou!
Tell Sir Bertrand that he may enter, now.

SORISMONDE (*smiling*): Since you refuse, to what end?

MELISSINDE: I refuse . . .
But . . . cowardice the spirit doth bemuse.

I owe this dying man by Christ His laws
At least to let Sir Bertrand plead his cause.

SORISMONDE: You owe it?

MELISSINDE: Yes. Let selfishness resist.
My lord may conquer it, if he persist.
(SORISMONDE *goes to the gallery and makes a sign.* BERTRAND *comes in and* SORISMONDE *disappears.*)

SCENE III

BERTRAND; MELISSINDE

BERTRAND: Ah, grace, that you receive me once again!
Persist! Persist! My duty calls so plain.
For still the sail is white, and Rudel lives.

MELISSINDE (*sitting among her cushions*):
Less ill, mayhap, than this report one gives.

BERTRAND: Do not speak so. A respite—heaven's meed—
Space to convince you. Princess, hear me!

MELISSINDE: Plead.

BERTRAND: A moment since, I stood so stupidly! . . .
The vision fled away so rapidly,
She hurled her 'No' against me like a blow,—
She who had been so kind a breath ago!
I was as one deluded, one who dreamed.
On the deserted air, a fragrance streamed,
Light witness, as your floating veil fled by,
Like to the perfumes, drifting ceaselessly,
That will haunt Tarsus to the very last,
Because once that way Cleopatra passed.

MELISSINDE (*smiling and holding out her slim wrists from which depend tiny boxes of perfumes*):
The fragrance was this perfume of the East,
Amber, a whiff of sandal, O the least,
Least bit. I wear it in this tiny golden flask,

(BERTRAND *kneels and kisses her hand.*)
Here on my wrist. Is it the same, I ask?
BERTRAND (*in a slightly changed voice*):
The same, . . . but added, measureless, I feel
Thy very self.
MELISSINDE (*as he is about to rise*): Since you are pleading, kneel.
BERTRAND (*kneeling*):
Rudel's report I am too vile to render!
A spirit sweet, a soul sad, true and tender;
His love for you! Nay, all words were too weak!
I am not fit to tell this romance.
MELISSINDE: Speak!
You love him then so much?
BERTRAND: Admire and love him.
When first he came to Aigues-Mortes, plain above him
Death hovered; his physician told him this;
Unflinching, facing death, he thought it bliss
Just to set sail, to see his dear Unknown
And die! This lover, with this aim alone,
Kindled my spirit and my heart approved him;
I sought him, saw him . . .
MELISSINDE: And at once you loved him?
BERTRAND: At once I loved him. Dreams the spirit blend.
I am his disciple, brother and his friend.
They all condemned! None understood him, none!
But I, I wished to follow . . .
MELISSINDE: Oh, well done!
BERTRAND: At first the ocean showed us clemency.
While billows rocked us softly, dreamily,
He bade me, from pink morn to twilight blue,
Repeat the lovely songs he made for you.
MELISSINDE: You said them well, I think, with that warm voice.
BERTRAND: Roland loved Alde, the lady of his choice,
Tristan adored Iseult; Flore, Blancefior;

But Oh, Rudel loved Melissinde still more!
Rudel pressed love beyond the last extreme!
Ah, his complaints, his tears, his prayers, his dream!
Night-long I watched. I know each tear he shed.

MELISSINDE: Then, it was you who watched beside his bed?

BERTRAND (*standing, lyrically declaiming*):

The voyage,—how, Lady, tell it, mile by mile?
This agony, still straining toward your smile?
O, we believed wind-driven endlessly
We'd wander always on a boundless sea!
The shattering shell, the mounting wave we saw!
Our prince was like the King of Ithaca.
Through all, he, dying, lived, by faith alone.
The dream that won me, all the others won!
Sometimes the weather cleared. A port was sighted.
Some smiling island beckoned and invited;
And we were fain to rest amid its flowers.
Still he refused; and breezes from its bowers
Freshened our sail. . . . And then, a calm. . . . And, hark,
Rattle of oars! To meet a Turkish barque!
We engage! We sink her! Onward! And we row!
Now stalks gaunt famine, deadliest, grizzliest foe!
Our men are spectres terrible to see;
Masts, stumps; sails, rags that fluttered helplessly.
Hope gone; Prince dying. . . . Then . . . Land! Comprehend . . .

MELISSINDE (*shuddering*): Thy awful perils, danger without end!

BERTRAND (*surprised*): Mine?

MELISSINDE (*hurriedly, trying to recall the words*):

Thine . . . for thy Prince . . . whose cause you undertake.
I . . . I . . . am grateful, . . . for the Prince's sake. . . .

BERTRAND: Madam . . .

MELISSINDE: Are you so modest you must stand apart,
Deny your service to your very heart?

A friend so loyal, love so pure and steady!
I go! My galley! Bid my men make ready!
I come!
(BERTRAND *seems about to speak.*)
But . . . not another word! O God!
(*She goes out, much moved and precipitately.*)

SCENE IV

BERTRAND; *later,* SQUARCIAFICO

BERTRAND: She comes.—Her "No" was but a lady's nod,—
A cruel jest. Even when men are dying,
They play the woman still. Lightly denying;
Dallying, from habit; barbarous for art;
Withholding solace from a dying heart.
(*He turns to the window.*)
Poor friend, who waitest the vision. . . . She is near.
Thou'lt die content, Rudel!
SQUARCIAFICO (*who enters at these words*): What is it I hear?
You are not Joffroy Rudel?
BERTRAND: I!
SQUARCIAFICO: Diavolo!
All my fair hopes in smoke and water go!
BERTRAND: Your hopes?
SQUARCIAFICO: Yes, when I saw your proud, brown head,
I said, "That's he!" "Our fortune's made," I said.
BERTRAND: Your fortune?
SQUARCIAFICO: Yes. "There," says I, "past a doubt,
The poet lover puts the rest to rout.
He comes as conqueror. He slew the giant:
He'll be her spouse. The Princess will be pliant."
BERTRAND: Hein?
SQUARCIAFICO: Oh, it was perfect! Manuel, one sees,
Detests Venetians and the Genoese.
Ah, if he reign, ill shall we merchants fare;—
Yet what we ask is but a small affair!

To let us work as we have always wrought;
A poet was the very king we sought.
Each in his own sphere, fitly occupied,
He could make poems while our crafts we plied.
Perfect! Just perfect! Lovers on the throne;
Through deputies their royal will made known,
They would not steel their wills to sudden zeal,
Forbidding trade . . .

BERTRAND: You'd have the . . . will to steal?

SQUARCIAFICO: Y . . . no. Oh, come. You understand. . . .

BERTRAND: I do, indeed.

SQUARCIAFICO: Rudel must die. This journey serves no need.

BERTRAND: No need! Adventure of the spirit, fire and flame,
You must fulfill some need, some purpose!

SQUARCIAFICO: Dame!

BERTRAND (*to himself*): They understood,—sailors before the mast!
But this, this treachour, meanest, least of last,
In his vile brain, for tricks and trading fit,
Dishonours the Idea . . . makes use of it!
Naught is so noble . . . better foul abuse! . . .
But there be some to ask, What is the use?
Must all be soiled by reckonings infamous?
—Would thou couldst hear this wretch, Fra Trophimus!

SQUARCIAFICO: To think this Manuel,—he be damned forever!—
Will soon espouse the Princess.

BERTRAND (*vehemently*): Never! Never!

SQUARCIAFICO (*aside*): A-ha!

BERTRAND: Never shall that barbarian, I swear
Take to himself that creature, fragile, rare!

SQUARCIAFICO (*to himself*): Another tack and all may yet be well!
(*Aloud*) Untimely in his death, this Lord Rudel.
(BERTRAND, *sunk in his thoughts, seems not to hear;* SQUARCIAFICO *comes closer.*)

She would have wed him; loving poets, who
Loves also Franks, and he is both;—like you!
This voyage too its part had surely played,
This voyage romantic,—which you, too, have made.
But he is dying. 'Tis the way of fate,—
Death comes too soon, and profit comes too late.
His hand outstretched to touch the goal, he dies . . .
And leaves a second man to seize the prize.

BERTRAND: Always the mast! If, floating from its peak,
I saw Death's signal! . . .

SQUARCIAFICO (*coming closer*): Child! Sir Baby! Speak!
Ho! For a dying man this fervor giving!
When you could plead so blithely for the living!
(BERTRAND *turns and looks at him; he shrinks back.*)

BERTRAND: Thou sayest? . . .

SQUARCIAFICO: Naught!

BERTRAND (*seizing him by the throat*): Wretch!

SQUARCIAFICO (*freeing himself*): Ho! I admire your plan
Of thanking me for good advice, young man!

BERTRAND: Ah, I will crush thee! . . .

SCENE V

The Same. MELISSINDE, SORISMONDE, *Ladies-in-Waiting, carrying the cope, the diadem and the sceptre of the* PRINCESS

MELISSINDE: What is this?

BERTRAND (*to* SQUARCIAFICO): Serpent! Hush!

SQUARCIAFICO: So be it,—serpent! One that's ill to crush!

BERTRAND: Thy poison bruise my heel? A trifling thing!

SQUARCIAFICO: 'Tis in thy heart that I will leave my sting!

MELISSINDE (*advancing, trembling*):

My guest thus menaced by a knavish wight?
Leave my domain before to-morrow's light!
For if dawn find thee still in Tripoli,
Sunrise shall find thee nailed upon a tree!

SQUARCIAFICO: Banishéd! This is ruin!
(*To* BERTRAND.) I give thee thanks!
Thou'lt see! I'll be avenged!
(*As he goes out.*) These ingrate Franks!

MELISSINDE: Banished! To please you I have said that word!

BERTRAND: That man had . . . had . . .

MELISSINDE: Had angered you, my lord.
It is enough. This instant we depart.
Go see if all is ready for the start;
Galley and rowers,—go!
(BERTRAND *gazes at her a moment as if bewildered and then goes out abruptly.*)

SCENE VI

MELISSINDE; SORISMONDE; *for a moment, the Ladies-in-Waiting*

MELISSINDE (*nervously, to* SORISMONDE): My diadem!
He knows not me,—so he must love this gem—
Whatever makes me Princess. So I've planned
To go as Princess, sceptre in my hand.
Give me my sceptre! Hah, a woeful weight!
(*She tries to put on her cope, but gives it back to one of the ladies-in-waiting.*)
Carry this mantle,—prison garb I hate!—
Down to the galley! Go! Make haste! Bestir!
Heavy these gems,—this gold; still heavier!
When we arrive, ye'll deck me queenly-wise!
(*Her ladies go out carrying all her ensignia of rank.*)
(*To* SORISMONDE.)
Dost thou think I will have to close his eyes?

SORISMONDE: You are overwrought, fearing this grizzly vision!
Ah, Madam, send your priest or your physician!

MELISSINDE: Nay, all were simple if one heeded you.
I suffer an obscure revolt, 'tis true,
Seeking one, pale, with dying eyes grown dull,—
Forsaking him who is living, beautiful!

SORISMONDE: Forswear, my lady, this fantastic goal!
Bide here. Reclaim your liberty of soul!
You love the other. Who then can forbid?
MELISSINDE: I love?—I told you, and I thought 'twas hid!
SORISMONDE: You are disconsolate. I, ravished quite.
Forsaking dreams, you'll turn to life and light!
MELISSINDE: And shall the lilies' sister give her token
To the first comer, virile, young, fair-spoken?
SORISMONDE: Nature, my Lady, such revenge may wreak.
MELISSINDE: Because I placed my arm beneath his cheek,
—And his cold hand grew warm within my own, . . .
SORISMONDE: Because on his pale brow such beauty shone. . . .
MELISSINDE: Because his sigh. . . . Oh, no! In vain declare
False reasons! I mistook him. . . . Thou wouldst dare
Make reasons for thyself, O Fool? . . . 'Twas Love
That so abused me, so made haste to prove
When his voice, grave and tender, named the friend
For whom I longed, yet dared not to attend,
Love whispered, 'twas himself! My heart took fire;
Desired it so, and hearkened to desire!
SORISMONDE: 'Tis clear.
MELISSINDE: For I had heard, with what excess
Of joy, my dreamer sought his far princess!
And now he comes, this brave, unhappy prince,
Through deadly pains, his worship to evince;
He comes, and gave his life to come;—and she
Whom he would see and die, waits tremblingly,
And seeks delays, and on her doubts would dwell,
Because he chose his messenger too well!
SORISMONDE: Eh, yes.
MELISSINDE: Too well! Seest thou, Sorismonde,
How one so brown can have a voice so blonde?
And one so proud, all conquering, be so mild,
With all the charming shyness of a child?
To wound the proud one, thou wert swift, O cupid!
SORISMONDE: You love him. Then bide here. Reason . . .

MELISSINDE: Is stupid,
Stupid, and flat, still living at one level!
—The good all good and evil wholly evil!
'Tis their commingling that makes all our trouble,
So many hearts are desperately double!
One held so long the cup of dreams a-brim,—
He who lies sick,—I love and pity him.
The other, I adore! Both loves I rue!
My heart between them has been riven in two!
SORISMONDE: Then, seek the ship; delight the dying eyes;
And afterwards you could. . . .
MELISSINDE: Base compromise!
Fit for thy Reason. All unworthy scheme!
Shall I descend to this, who loved the Dream?
Joffroy Rudel die happy in my arms,—
His friend, surviving, then enjoy my charms?
Ah! worldly counsel, very fit and fond!
Not that! No middle courses, Sorismonde!
Not happiness bought with a compromise!
I have dreamed of love sublime, not otherwise!
If I forswear love mystic and sublime,
Proudly at least I'll plunge in splendid crime!
SORISMONDE: You seek new subtilities wherein to rove?
MELISSINDE: If Lord Bertrand should know of this my love? . . .
SORISMONDE: I understand. . . .
MELISSINDE: 'Tis this that tempteth me.
SORISMONDE: To . . . break resistance . . . conquer loyalty?
MELISSINDE: It were in truth a very vile success.
Who thinks not on such cruelties, natheless?
Ah, what true woman in the list of us?
One needs must love whom one makes infamous;
Console the pangs if one have caused the grief.
Of all sweet victories, hearts find it chief
To put beneath our feet that foe we hate,
That wretched Honour ye so proudly prate.
What woman has not sought, as I seek now,

To break man's march triumphal, wilfully,—
Not quite Delilah, no, but Omphale?
To hold a hero with a strand of hair?
What woman doth not seek, if she but dare,
To hold Orestes bounden as with chains,
While his Pylades dies, he knows,—and he remains!

SCENE VII

MELISSINDE; BERTRAND

BERTRAND: Your glittering galley waits in expectation,
The rowers ready. . . .
MELISSINDE (*to herself*): Horrible temptation!
(SORISMONDE *withdraws quickly, and goes quietly out.*)
BERTRAND: Why this strange gaze that long upon me lingers?
Why do you twist your rings with fevered fingers?
MELISSINDE: Mayhap new motives in my fancy run,
Forbidding me to follow. . . .
BERTRAND (*earnestly*): Surely none!
MELISSINDE: Yet . . . still I doubt . . . and tremble at your plan.
If I love someone . . .
BERTRAND (*vehemently*): Nay, you love no man!
MELISSINDE: 'Tis he says this! . . .Alas! 'Tis even so.
I love. 'Tis Love that bids me not to go.
BERTRAND (*starting violently*):
You love another? Whom? . . . That I may slay! . . .
MELISSINDE: You'd kill him? Ah, you know not what you say.
BERTRAND (*beside himself*): Tell me his name!
MELISSINDE: Must I?
BERTRAND: Yes!
MELISSINDE (*going toward him, languorously*): Must I?
BERTRAND (*recoiling*): No!
Ah, tell me not his name! I will not know!
For if 'tis he . . .
(*Drawing his sword*) him above all I'll slay!
MELISSINDE: Ah, do not strike! The name I did not say!

BERTRAND: I am a knight forsworn!
MELISSINDE: Nay, still your honour
Is safe.
BERTRAND (*half to himself*): Lost! For with joy I heard, and looked upon her!
A throb of joy!
MELISSINDE: I am proud past all belief!
BERTRAND: Steal from a dying man! O cursed thief!
O, haste! Thou art not cruel! O relent!
MELISSINDE: 'Tis for that cause I go not. If we went,
I'd tremble lest my heart prove false to me,
Seized with some madness of nobility!
Could I myself against myself defend?
—Long have I loved him. Try to comprehend.
He was,—I sigh because I know 'tis true,—
My better soul, and my worse soul is you!
To be yours . . . thine. I must not look . . . I know
Into Rudel's eyes! Ah, I will not go!
You'll cease to plead, lest my will bow before you!
BERTRAND: What shall I do? . . . Rudel . . . I . . .
I adore you!
Ah, turn your lovely, languorous look on me! . . .
I fear that window open on the sea!
MELISSINDE (*flies to the window, closes it quickly and turns away from it*): Ah, now 'tis closed! I have thee, and will keep!
'Tis closed, I tell thee! From that casement deep
None shall look out. And all within is fair.
(*She comes down to him.*)
Ah! Let us breathe the perfumes on the air!
From this my palace never be thou led!
See, they have strewn the hall with roses red,—
This hall where erst cold lilies were displayed.
—The window's shut, I say! Be not afraid!—
I have renounced pale flowers with mystic wile
For amorous crimson roses! Prithee, smile!
Nay, we know nothing. How then should we know?

We'll ask nobody. Always kneeling so,
Thou'lt live. And find my arms alone are near.
What is remorse? And what is there to fear?
Who told us of a ship? Of a Rudel?
Beside our love there's naught that's real to tell!
Beyond the window, gold sands woo the tides
Of a blue gulf . . . all blue . . . where no ship rides!
Some day we'll open it,—in after years,—
This window, and we'll mock at all our fears . . .
For we'll see nothing! What is this silly fable?
A white wing changing to a wing of sable?
An idle tale, Bertrand!—The window's fast!—
Naught there, Bertrand, naught! Only love can last!
Why then imagine something grim and dread
Beyond the window? Soft its light is shed;
Gold and enamel all its spaces fill . . .

BERTRAND: Ah, must you talk but of this window still?

MELISSINDE: Oh, it is false! I only speak . . . of thee
And of my love, and of thy love for me. . . .
Nay, but thy collar's clasp becomes thee well.
Bertrand, who gave it thee?

BERTRAND: Joffroy Rudel.

MELISSINDE: Ah, well! 'Tis naught! Throw it away!

BERTRAND: My brother,
I pleased her with thy joyaunces!

MELISSINDE: No other
Bedizement you needed to display
Than thy brown jerkin, stained with foam and fray!
Bold young adventurer, what were garb uncouth?
For clasp upon thy throat thou'd have my mouth.
Do not shrink back! Nay, when thy heart deniest
Thine eyes the sight of me, look, love, thou liest!
Thou knowest . . .

BERTRAND: That thy voice thrilled me and my heart replied!

(*The window is flung open by a gust of wind.*)

MELISSINDE: Ah! The sea breeze has flung the window wide!

BERTRAND: The window is opened.
MELISSINDE: Haste thee! Close it!
BERTRAND: No!
I fear the horizon,—a black sail below!
MELISSINDE: Then turn thy eyes and swiftly it is done!
BERTRAND: No! I would look!—would feel it!
MELISSINDE (*rising to go to the window; moving close along the wall*): Let us shun
Facing the window. . . . So, I can approach. . . .
(*At the moment of reaching the casement, she hesitates, not daring to close the window; slowly she draws back, always moving close against the wall; and she falls beside* BERTRAND *on the divan.*)
Ah, well! We'll bide here! Nothing can encroach;
Wrapped in our love profound that shields and covers,
And be like all the world of happy lovers!
BERTRAND: How sayest thou?
MELISSINDE: I say that all mankind
Has still some window, fears to look behind,
Feeling a secret chill in heart and hand,
Hearing, behind, the Window's shrill demand!
And all bide, cowering. None will turn and know,
Lest dolorous Duty's ship be seen below,
Calling them far from joys they long to broach,
Or, if it were too late, the dark reproach
Of thy black folds, Remorse, float overhead!
All cower among their cushions like the dead!
All, all would keep the dear desire, the joy
That one glance toward the Window could destroy.
None dare to see black sails above the billows!
Let us, like them, crouch in the coward pillows!
(*She puts her arms about him and they both hide their faces in the cushions.*)
BERTRAND: Aye, let us bide! Alas! The bitter dole!
Can we? Woe's me! I have, thou hast, a soul!

Can souls in such a plight know happiness?
We are not like those others!

MELISSINDE: Certes, yes!
I love thee!

(*A noise of cheerful voices is heard through the window.*)

BERTRAND (*trembling*): What is that?

MELISSINDE: 'Tis naught. My pages
And lackeys, and some folly that engages.

VOICES (*without*): One . . . three . . . eight . . .

MELISSINDE: Naught! A favourite device;
They often gather there to cast their dice,
To play . . .

THE VOICES: Tra la!—It's fair!

BERTRAND: O Melissinde, I love thee!
What fairy at thy christening bent above thee?
To tell thy golden hair thy name was given,
Thy honied lips . . .

THE VOICES: The sea! Look! Look!

BERTRAND (*trembling*): Just Heaven!
What do they look at?

MELISSINDE: Something far away!

A VOICE: See you that ship?

BERTRAND: "See you that ship?" they say!

MELISSINDE: Ah, well, don't listen!

BERTRAND: Nay, I must. That voice . . .

MELISSINDE: *I* heed not. . . . What says he?

BERTRAND (*with a hopeless gesture*): We have no choice.

MELISSINDE: Is there but one ship? Why, believe? alack! . . .

A VOICE: They hoist a sail! Look! Look! The sail is black!

(MELISSINDE *and* BERTRAND *recoil.*)

A VOICE: I'm going to the beach! You others, come!

(*A sound of voices and of retreating footsteps.* BERTRAND *and* MELISSINDE, *not daring to look at each other, move slowly away from each other. A long, long silence.*)

MELISSINDE (*at last in a voice that is hardly audible*): Ah, well?

BERTRAND: Weil? Naught!
(*Mechanically he lifts* MELISSINDE'S *scarf which lies among the cushions, and breathes its fragrance.*)
This perfume fills the room!
What did you say it was? The memory slips . . .
MELISSINDE: Yes. . . . I . . . amber. . . .
BERTRAND: Thy veil. . . . O, with my lips
I drink its fragrance. . . .
(*He falls down in a heap, with terrible rending sobs.*)
Oh! oh! oh! It is the end!
Dead! He is dead! My brother! Oh, my friend!
The end! What have I done! Unsatisfied!
And you, what have you done? Betrayed he died!
MELISSINDE: Horrible! But I still have thee . . . thy vows.
BERTRAND: Thou hast the traitor! Oh, a worthy spouse!
MELISSINDE: But treachery, if Love be its creator . . .
BERTRAND: I lack the beauty of a daring traitor!
I am no hero whom a proud crime frees.
I am a child led by a passing breeze;
A feeble heart, whose life when all is said
Is treason, good or bad as it is led!
A facile thing,—to move me to betray!
I belong wholly to the mood, the day,
Why, but this morning I was madly brave,—
And now . . . and now . . . I am a perfume's slave!
The moment wins me! Of the mood I am wrought!
You have me? Truly who has me has naught!
Poet unstable, toy of every breeze,
A pool that still reflects the thing it sees!
MELISSINDE: Bertrand, remorse misleads you!
BERTRAND: Aye, its length
Proves that I lack even the wretched strength
To wear a crime accomplished like a crest!
Yea, my remorse is weakness like the rest!
I, least of wretches, if I love or grieve,
Do good or evil,—never I achieve!

Yea, I know fair impulsions. I can thrill
Making the promise I will not fulfill!
—His long devotion cozened at the end!
O crime repentance never can amend!

MELISSINDE: Bertrand . . .

BERTRAND: Couldst thou, who seest naked before thy eyes
My shame, despise as I myself despise;
Enchantress whose Circean arts have led
To this my doom for a caprice . . .

MELISSINDE: He said? . . .
He saw me as a woman bold to woo?
For crime, remorse, and honour lost, he knew,
No compensation of heroic fashion,
Saw no exalted, all-embracing passion?
Did I alone dream only Love was king?
—For this we did so horrible a thing!

BERTRAND (*frenzied*): Yes, she has slain my soul!
(*He falls on his knees, weeping.*)
No, as I live
I said it not! Thy pardon! O, forgive!
Since what is done, I need thy lips! Forever!
It is impossible we two should sever!
Let thy hair shroud the shame none can atone!
I dare not . . . Oh, I cannot . . . be alone!

MELISSINDE: No. Leave me! 'Tis too late. In vain you cling.
—For this we did so horrible a thing!—
Unhappy, can I scorn thee, when in me
Myself is more deceived than I in thee?
Forgetting in my arms! No task supreme!
I was divided 'twixt desire and dream.
O vast unrest! Alas, alas, my soul,
Where shall I find the good that makes thee whole?
Immortally thirst and famishéd,
Where is thy spring, O thirst? Where, hunger, is thy bread?

BERTRAND: All's ended.

MELISSINDE: Ended.

BERTRAND: Melissinde. . . .
MELISSINDE: Bertrand . . .
BERTRAND: Oh, what he suffered, dying! . . . At my hand!
MELISSINDE (*going to the window*):
O dear betrayed, I come! To seek the sight
Of thy dear corpse!
(*With a great cry.*) Bertrand! The sail is white!
BERTRAND: God!
MELISSINDE: But they said . . . we heard . . .
BERTRAND (*who has rushed to the window*): The gloomy sail
Was hoisted for the Knight in Emerald Mail;
Yonder his ship speeds for Byzantium!
But our ship whitely beckons us to come!
The sail is white!
MELISSINDE: White under the blue heaven!
White as the hope of pardon! God! Forgiven!
Prolong, dear God, this whiteness seen afar,
For that white sail becomes my highest star!
The duty I denied rings like a bell!
I come to thee! I come, Joffroy Rudel!
I come! And dying thou art dear to me
By all the ill I almost did to thee!

(*Curtain*)

FOURTH ACT

Same setting as for the First Act. The hour of rose and gold that precedes the sunset. JOFFREY RUDEL, *in the same place, on his pallet. More ghastly than in the morning, his eyes still fixed upon the shore, completely immobile. At his side, watchful,* ERASMUS. *Kneeling, his head sunk in his hands,* FRA TROPHIMUS, *at the foot of the pallet. To Left and Right, the Mariners, much incensed against* SQUARCIAFICO, *who, arms crossed, stands in the centre of the scene; he turns, head bared, toward* JOFFREY RUDEL; *he is concluding a speech. An angry murmur runs through the group. The Master restrains the Mariners, who want to set upon him.*

SCENE I

JOFFROY RUDEL, FRA TROPHIMUS, ERASMUS, SQUARCIAFICO, THE MARINERS, BRUNO, BISTAGNE, PEGOFAT, TROBALDO, FRANCOIS, *etc.*

SQUARCIAFICO: So I have told you what I came to say.
She loves him; he loves her. So both delay.
THE MARINERS: Enough! Let's throw him over!
THE MASTER (*to the sailors*): Hear him through!
THE MARINERS: Coward! He'll kill the Prince! What would he do?
SQUARCIAFICO (*addressing the Prince*): Your friend Bertrand . . .
PEGOFAT: Thou liest!
SQUARCIAFICO: The Princess . . .
BRUNO: The Princess! Never!
FRANCOIS: 'Tis false! He lies!
THE MASTER: No less
Let him say on.
(JOFFROY RUDEL *has not moved a muscle and his eyes still seek the shore.*)

SQUARCIAFICO (*more loudly and defiantly*): This knave . . .
BISTAGNE: 'Tis thou!
SQUARCIAFICO: My word!
The two are mad for love. Prince, have you heard?
While still your heart awaits your messenger . . .
ERASMUS: The Prince is weak. He does not hear you, sir.
SQUARCIAFICO: To torture this Sir Bertrand, I have tried
To make the Prince hear all before he died.
That were the sweetest vengeance I could wreak!
ERASMUS: The Prince no longer hears, nor can he speak.
Only his eyes are living.
SQUARCIAFICO: He must know!
Oh, but he must!
ERASMUS: He hears not.
FRA TROPHIMUS (*lifting his eyes to heaven*): Better so!
SQUARCIAFICO (*to* THE MASTER): Hell's fury!—You at least need not be dumb.
If, weeping, this vile hypocrite should come
Kneeling beside the dead man he betrayed,
Tell him his punishment was not delayed;—
That Rudel cursed him, having heard this thing!
THE MASTER (*to* THE MARINERS, *indicating* SQUARCIAFICO):
Now you can take this man and let him swing.
SQUARCIAFICO: What?
THE MARINERS: Kill him! Blasphemer! Liar!
PEGOFAT: The caitiff puts
Evil upon the Princess.
SQUARCIAFICO: But . . .
BRUNO: No "buts!"
No man shall live who touches the Princess.
FRANCOIS: She will come!
BISTAGNE: 'Tis sure.
TROBALDO: We have his word, no less;
Sir Bertrand's word!
SQUARCIAFICO: Listen . . . ye do mistake! . . .

PEGOFAT: You must have weighty interests at stake
To make this lie!
SQUARCIAFICO: Hotheads without a brain!
BRUNO: You'll never bring bad news aboard again!
SQUARCIAFICO: But . . .
MARRIAS: You'd snatch hope from the dying agony?
SQUARCIAFICO: But . . .
FRANCOIS: Thou'dst tell him he will never live to see
Her whom he lives to see?
SQUARCIAFICO: But . . .
SQUARCIAFICO: Thy malice hopes
So to besmirch our idol?
SQUARCIAFICO: 'Tis a friend who opes
Your eyes!
TROBALDO: And if we want 'em closed? We make the rules.
SQUARCIAFICO: But you are fools!
JUAN: And if we would be fools?
FRANCOIS: Thou'dst take away our Princess far away?
Good! At the yard-arm let his body sway!
PEGOFAT: No! Chop his head off!
BRUNO: No! Slow tortures, man!
FRANCOIS: Let's hack his feet off! Ho, my Catalan!
SQUARCIAFICO: Oh! Oh!
BISTAGNE: Tear out his tongue!
SQUARCIAFICO (*in a faint voice*): Ah!
TROBALDO: Slit his nose!
SQUARCIAFICO: No!
PEGOFAT: Let's try the trick the Northern seaman knows;—
Clout his hand to the mask, by sticking through
A knife, well ground; you pierce it straight and true,
Then he himself, beneath the lash, must free
His hand,—and not too gently, so, you'll see!—
'Twill slit clear to the fingers!
SQUARCIAFICO: My hand! Woe!
PEGOFAT (*tranquilly*): Sometimes, they leave a piece that won't
let go.

SQUARCIAFICO: I am citizen of Genoa!
(*All the* MARINERS *let go of him and fall back.*)
BRUNO: Hein! What?
FRANCOIS: Oh!
BISTAGNE: Ah!
TROBALDO: The devil!
PEGOFAT: We nearly wrought irremediable evil!
My lord is Genoese!
(*All bow before* SQUARCIAFICO.)
SQUARCIAFICO (*reassured and insolent once more*): Ah-hah!
(*Looking about with mocking confidence.*) Genoese!
(*All bow once more.*)
BRUNO (*straightening himself up*): But . . .
(*Changing his tone, and laying hold on* SQUARCIAFICO)
I care no more than for a rotten nut!
SQUARCIAFICO (*aghast*): Hein?
FRANCOIS (*shoving him toward the rail*):
Swim to Genoa, then, thou Genoese!
SQUARCIAFICO: Help! Help!
FRA TROPHIMUS (*running*): Enough!
PEGOFAT: No prayer helps such as these!
Nay, let him swim! He's not sewed in a sack!
SQUARCIAFICO (*clawing the rail madly*): I have money! . . .
THE MARINERS: Heave him in!
SQUARCIAFICO: Gold! Red gold!
MARRIAS: Whack!
(SQUARCIAFICO *hits the water.*)
FRA TROPHIMUS: What have you done?
BRUNO: Drowned! That's the last of him!
FRANCOIS (*to* FRA TROPHIMUS): Let be! A rascal! Let him swim!
VOICE OF SQUARCIAFICO (*taunting from the water*): I swim!
BISTAGNE: Good! Wait!
(*He seizes a bow, tightens and aims it.*)
FRA TROPHIMUS: No! No!
THE MARINERS: Yes! Take good aim!

(*Everybody has crowded close to the rail, Right, and leans over, watching* SQUARCIAFICO, *as he swims toward shore.* ERASMUS *alone stays at the Prince's side.* JOFFROY RUDEL *has not seemed conscious of what has passed.*)

ERASMUS: Hilloa!
The Prince! Look at him! What has changed him so?
(*Everybody turns and sees* JOFFROY RUDEL, *who slowly raises his hand, pointing to something very far away.*)

FRA TROPHIMUS: He has seen something?

PEGOFAT: What is it he shows?

BRUNO: Oh! He is right! Look, yonder! Something rose,—
Rose-pink and gold! It moves!

FRANCOIS: He is right, by all the powers!
Look! Out at sea, . . . a garden full of flowers!
(*A burst of music reaches them.*)

BISTAGNE: Noel! The Genoese lied mightily!
No doubt! No doubt! . . . That music! It is She!

PEGOFAT: A golden galley shedding golden light!

BRUNO (*running madly about and embracing everybody*):
'Tis She, I tell you! She! Almost in sight!
(*The* MARINERS *crowd the gunwales, they climb the masts, they perch in the rigging and wave wildly.*)

FRA TROPHIMUS (*falling on his knees*):
Father, we thank Thee, Who hast heard our prayer
That Thy child, dying, should not taste despair!

PEGOFAT: She comes! 'Tis She! The purple pennants float!

BRUNO: Sail of vermillion samite!

FRANCOIS: All the boat
Is wreathed with bloom!

BISTAGNE: No pinnance but a bower!
See, the maintop, a garden all in flower!

TROBALDO: Hark to the viols!

BRUNO: All her canvas spread!
And, look! the very oars engarlanded!

PEGOFAT: When from the blades the shining drops they shake
A shower of petals follow in their wake!

THE MARINERS: Seest thou the Princess? Where? Where?
Yes, 'tis She,
Erect, beneath that scarlet canopy!
JUAN: Ah, beautiful!
THE MASTER: Swift, swift the galley glides!
Foam sprays the Persian rugs along its sides.
ERASMUS: Lute, harp, and dulcimer . . . I make them out.
FRA TROPHIMUS: The Queen of Sheba.
MARRIAS: Let's wave our arms! And shout!
ALL (*waving frantically*): Melissinde! Princess! Glory! It is She!
The Princess! Noel!
ERASMUS: What has come over me?
It takes me by the gorge!
(*He shouts.*) Noel!
(*He turns to* FRA TROPHIMUS.) I cried!
FRA TROPHIMUS (*pressing his hand*):
And like the rest, tears in your eyes, undried!
THE MASTER: Their three-banked galley grapples us! Be wary!
Widen that bulwark,—entrance for our Fairy!
(*With axes the men fall to work, enlarging the opening in the bulwark.*)
FRA TROPHIMUS: The Prince! His mantle! Swift! We must prepare him.
(*Low.*) And that we may prepare her, let us bear him
A little further back. . . . For our poor Prince,
Livid . . . eyes glazed . . . might make the bravest wince!
THE MASTER: There She is!
PEGOFAT: Quick! Our cloaks beneath her feet!
(*On the deck, they make a path for her with the tattered garments torn from their shoulders.*)
ALL (*their voices husky*): Don't crowd! Stand back!
You'd touch her! 'Tis not meet!
Silence!—Line up!—Kneel!—She!
(*A great silence. The violins are hushed. The Galley stops*

noiselessly; clouds of incense rise; and under the scarlet canopy, MELISSINDE *appears. She stands for a moment, motionless.*)

A SAILOR (*in the silence, says softly*): The Virgin Blest!

(*Two Sarracen slaves come forward to unroll before* MELISSINDE *a rich carpet. She checks them with a gesture,—and in a voice, full of emotion*):

SCENE II

The Same. MELISSINDE, SORISMONDE, *Ladies-in-Waiting, Children, Slaves, etc.; later,* BERTRAND

MELISSINDE: No! No! This tattered serge is far the best!

(*She advances very slowly; looking about her with stupefaction. The Ladies of her Household range themselves noiselessly in the background; the musicians remain on the galley;* ERASMUS *and* FRA TROPHIMUS *stand so that they conceal from her* JOFFROY RUDEL, *who seems unconscious; his eyes are closed.*)

MELISSINDE (*overwhelmed by all that she sees*):

This ship! These kneeling people! Are we dreaming?
These poor ones kneel! And oh, their tears are streaming!
Could I imagine such great misery?
(*To the Mariners.*) O, my Friends!

PEGOFAT: It was She who said that! She!

MELISSINDE (*advancing*): Oh, all these poor ones, tattered, sick, forlorn,—
Joy!—joy for me!—in their hurt eyes is born!
Sweeten such sorrow? Me? . . . My heart must break!
Could I have guessed, though Bertrand for their sake,
Told all their story? Could it waken me?
What's told is nothing! We must come and see!
(*With an involuntary shudder.*)
But he . . . Joffroy Rudel?

FRA TROPHIMUS: Madam, be brave!

He is so ill—he looks so ill.—We crave
Time to prepare you . . .

MELISSINDE: Ah! . . . I am calm, you see!

FRA TROPHIMUS (*standing aside and signing to* ERASMUS *to do likewise*): Then, Princess, come!

MELISSINDE (*seeing* RUDEL): Oh, God!
(*She falls on her knees, sobbing.*) For me! For me!
(*She weeps silently.* RUDEL *opens his eyes; seeing her, they widen and grow bright, and a smile illumines his face.*)

ERASMUS: Oh, look!

MELISSINDE: That smile! He waited all that weary while!
To think—to think—I might have missed that smile!

FRA TROPHIMUS: See, we have dressed him in his robes of state.
He knew that you would come or soon or late.
He neither hears nor speaks; we hardly durst
Believe he saw. And yet, he saw you first!

MELISSINDE (*still kneeling, and gazing at him*):
During the dire delay, he trusted me!
He never doubted!

PEGOFAT: No!

BRUNO: No more than we!

MELISSINDE: No more than you?

THE MASTER: Damn you to flame undying,
Be still!

FRANCOIS (*emphatically*): Not all the time the Genoese was lying!

MELISSINDE (*terrified*): The Genoese? Before him?

BERTRAND (*who a moment before has appeared on deck*):
Wretch! . . . Could such woe befall? . . .

FRA TROPHIMUS (*to* MELISSINDE): But he heard nothing.

JOFFROY RUDEL (*in a weak voice*): Yea, I heard it all.

MELISSINDE (*wringing her hands*): O God! What could you think? My anguish mounts! . . .

JOFFROY (*gently*): I thought: what is't this wicked fool recounts?
—But I spoke not a word, not even low,—
For you were coming! It behooved me, so,

—For words are counted when the breaths oppress,—
To keep my words, each one, for the Princess.

MELISSINDE: God!

JOFFROY RUDEL: Though I heard him that was only part.
I looked to land. I felt, deep in my heart,
That if I looked to land, always, always,
My mute regard a clarion voice would raise;
That its sole fixity, its strength of faith,
Would surely draw you to me ere my death,
Aye, though a charm had held you in your home!

MELISSINDE: Oh!

JOFFROY: And you see! You see that you have come!
(*He sees* BERTRAND.)
Grace, Bertrand! Where's thy hand?
(BERTRAND, *pushed by* FRA TROPHIMUS. *comes forward and trembling puts his hand in that of* RUDEL.)
Thou knewest . . . no danger . . .
That the . . . false witness of an evil stranger
Would make me wrong thee by a single thought?

MELISSINDE: O, noble trust!

JOFFROY: Repaid! The rest is naught!
For you are here! My dream! It did not fail!
(*With a smile.*)
The Princess comes! O thou my Princess, hail!
(*He closes his eyes, exhausted.*)

ERASMUS: His strength is spent, but he will rally. Wait!

BERTRAND (*in a heavy voice to* FRA TROPHIMUS):
God! I must tell him ere it is too late!

FRA TROPHIMUS: Tell what, my son?
(BERTRAND *hangs his head.*) Thou seekst thine own relief!
Coward confession, to assuage thy grief!
Trouble his dying, for thy shame's surcease?
Nay, be thou silent; let him die in peace!

BERTRAND: But soon he'll know I have betrayed his faith!

FRA TROPHIMUS: His soul, wrapt in the solemn peace of death,

Knowing, but full of Christian tenderness,
Will know thy soul, pity its wretchedness.

MELISSINDE: Let him come back, my God! For he has shown
My soul true faith. His dream becomes my own.
Trusting a flower, its bloom we sooner see:
The lady he believes me, I will be!
I'll soothe his dying for a penance fit;—
So much the better if I shrink from it!
This poet, O I swear it by the rood,
Gently shall slip from life's inquietude;
My smile shall hold him in a golden mesh
The while he treads the dark path of all flesh.
Beauty shall strive against Death's brutal powers.
If his eyes open, petals, fall in showers;
Perfumes, in misty vapors soft ascend;
Ye songs of harps, 'neath harpers' fingers, blend
With our pure love; and yet be thou no less
A drug to lull to chastest drunkenness.

ERASMUS: The Prince's eyes are open.

(*Flower petals fall in soft showers about him; the music sounds; censers swing.*)

MELISSINDE (*leaning above him*): Prince Joffroy Rudel . . .

JOFFROY: 'Twas not a dream.

MELISSINDE: I came. You called me well.
I knew your love and its long constancy!
Long since, I knew it! It was sung to me
By pilgrims;—aye and jonglers told the tale!
Thy love was like our palm trees, when a gale
Blows to a blossoming tree from some far beach
Its mating blossom. . . . So your thoughts could reach
My own, borne on the winds. The tears that seemed most vain
Fell, warm, upon my hands. . . . I felt them plain!
But, since you wished to know the loved Unknown,
And since you called, I came;—so strong has grown
Your love's dominion: I have come, among

The perfumes of this censer slowly swung,
Perfumes compact of every summer flower,
While chimes the bell from far Tortosa's tower,
And dulcimer and lute unite to say,
"Rejoice! Rejoice! It is their wedding day!"

JOFFROY (*dazzled*): Can this life hold this perfect happiness?

MELISSINDE: How do you find the far away Princess?

JOFFROY: I look at her, all dazzled! Every prayer . . .
Every least wish, come true! Her shining hair
Escapes its bonds, bright waves that float and cling!
My last sun laughs, reflected in her ring!
O slender throat, trembling 'neath gems the while!
O unknown, well-known magic of her smile!
Her voice, the tumult of a hidden spring,
Fresh water after weary wandering!
Her eyes, whose gaze I came so far to win,
So deep they are that I am drowned therein!

MELISSINDE (*putting her ring on his finger*):
See, on your hand my ring of amethyst,—
Fit emblem of our mournful, happy tryst.
(*Putting her necklace about his throat.*)
And on thy neck, my collar with its blason.
(*Loosing all her hair around him.*)
And here, love, is my hair, O thou new Jason,
The Golden Fleece you sought, at such a price
Of struggle, anguish, sighs and sacrifice!
Pilgrim of love, who sang in far off lands,
Here are the hands you praised. Hold thou my hands!
And since such tones thy dreams perchance would lend her,
Hark to thy Lady's voice, submissive, tender! . . .

JOFFROY: You fear my eyes, their glassy, dull disguise?

MELISSINDE: Here are my lips, dear love, upon your eyes.

JOFFROY: My lips affright you, parched by fever's drought?

MELISSINDE: And now, here is my mouth upon your mouth.
(*Silence.*)

JOFFROY (*calling*): Bertrand!

(*As* BERTRAND *draws near; to* MELISSINDE, *indicating the Mariners who surround* BERTRAND):

I made these friends, these mariners, a vow,—
I'd tell thee of their hearts towards me.

(*Too weak to continue, he signs to* BERTRAND.) Speak thou!

BERTRAND: Couldst thou but know these men, uncouth and wild,
See 'neath their tan, the spirit of a child!
Ah, love these simple conquerors of the ocean,
Who won the Prince his dream by sheer devotion!
They are like blossoms on rude thistles borne,—
An azure heart bestead with many a thorn.

MELISSINDE: I smile on them . . .

JOFFROY: I quake with cold!

MELISSINDE: Joffroy,
You are in my arms, held close . . .

JOFFROY: No chills annoy! . . .
By mortal agony I am oppressed!
Are you there?

MELISSINDE: You are cradled on my breast,
Soft, like a little child!

JOFFROY: I am not afraid.

MELISSINDE: Dream of our love; its holy height displayed
Above all love; the glory we command;
That I am here; that I am Melissinde.
Tell me again you love me, and how far!

JOFFROY: I die!

MELISSINDE: My pearls, above you, like a star!

JOFFROY: Your heavenly throat! Oh, darkness! Dizziness!
I see naught . . . and I go . . .

MELISSINDE: Cling to my dress.
Hold fast! My tresses all about you flow!

JOFFROY: Your hair! Ah, still your hair! I'll not let go!
Its fragrance wraps me round. . . .

MELISSINDE (*to* FRA TROPHIMUS): Good Priest, Alas!
Ought you, alone, to watch his spirit pass?

FRA TROPHIMUS: No, Lady. Love is holy. 'Tis God's road.
Who dies for love dies in the grace of God.
MELISSINDE: Joffroy Rudel, our love knew heavenly things.
Our meeting souls have touched each other's wings!
JOFFROY: Your cope, bedecked with gold and many a stone,
I wish to touch it! . . . Icy to the bone,
My fingers feel not jewel nor orfray;
My hands are dead already. . . .
FRA TROPHIMUS: Let us pray!
(*Everybody gathers around him.*)
MELISSINDE (*dolorously*): Ho!
FRA TROPHIMUS: *Profiscere anima* . . .
(*The prayer is heard in quiet murmurs.*)
JOFFROY: I am dying!
MELISSINDE: Harp, softly sing and soothe his spirit's sighing.
(*Soft music.*)
JOFFROY: Speak, for your voice is music, and to prove you
Are near. Dying, I have my dream.
MELISSINDE (*her arms about him*): I love you.
FRA TROPHIMUS: *Deus clemens* . . .
(*Murmurs of the prayers and soft whisperings of the harps.*)
JOFFROY: Speak on, lest I should hear
The stealthy step . . . the step that draws so near . . .
Speak on, and I will die and never flinch.
FRA TROPHIMUS: *Libera, Domine* . . .
(*Murmur of harps.*)
MELISSINDE: Among my terebinths,
Dear love, at twilight, dreaming,—it was you
My spirit yearned for. Mid my blossoms blue
At morning, seated 'neath my myrtle tree,
'Twas you to whom I whispered silently.
JOFFROY: Speak! Speak!
FRA TROPHIMUS: *Ex omnibus periculis* . . .
MELISSINDE: Tall lilies led me where my garden is,—
And when one bent, it seemed to me a sign

That I could trust that confidant divine, . . .
That love so royal need not be dissembled
To my pure lilies who bent low and trembled!

JOFFROY: Speak, for your voice is music! "Bent above you" . . .
Speak on. . . .

MELISSINDE: I told my lilies that I love you.

JOFFROY: I go. My Dream was truth. I found my Star.
Grace, Lord of life! Grace, Melissinde! . . . There are
So many whom the froward fates betray, . . .
Who never find their Princess far away!

MELISSINDE (*cradling him in her arms*):
How many see too closely and too long,—
Die disenchanted,—a more cruel wrong!
Better to part when hearts are fresh and fond
Than see it fade,—the freshness of the bond.
And my embrace has strangeness in its sweetness;—
The Stranger with the Sister, there's completeness!
We two will never know a graying glory;
The Adored will never be an oft told story.
Still, still afar, who could from far adore,
When thy eyes close to open nevermore
Thou'lt see me always, wrapt in light sublime,
For the first time,—forever the first time!

JOFFROY: Hail and farewell, Princess, my one desire!

FRA TROPHIMUS: *Libera, Domine* . . .

MELISSINDE (*standing, lifts him up in her arms, toward the glory that shines upon the sea with the crimson and purple of the setting sun*):
The heavens are on fire!
Poet and Prince, right fitting is thy death;
Upheld by her you loved with your last breath;
In love, in grace, in majesty, my Prince,
Thou diest, blest of God!
Thou needst not wince
At wax and phials, symbols sinister.
Nay! Thou hast flowers and strains of dulcimer

To sweeten death, and speed thy spirit free
While the sun sinks in splendour on the sea!
(JOFFROY RUDEL *is dead. His head sinks on his breast. Gently she lays him down.* FRA TROPHIMUS *comes forward.*)

MELISSINDE: Close not his eyes. He sees me in his sleep.

SORISMONDE (*affrighted*): He holds thy hair. . . . He keeps it!

MELISSINDE: And shall keep!
(*With a dagger drawn from the dead man's girdle, she cuts off her long, shining locks and* RUDEL'S *hands fall back and gather it about him.*)

BERTRAND: It is too much!

MELISSINDE (*without turning toward him*): Who speaks thus?

BERTRAND: 'Tis too much!

MELISSINDE: You, Bertrand? All we owe! Naught must we clutch!
Warp with the weaving, I abjure the whole!
My soul at last has served another's soul
And I am different. What I would reject,
What hold, attest this single deed's effect!
Love's roses, dreams' white lilies, all are less
Than the soul's springtime, self-forgetfulness!
And lest this springtime fail in summer's heat,
Mount Carmel's path shall know my climbing feet!

BERTRAND: Alas!

MELISSINDE (*to the Mariners*):
Your task, O Sailors, is achieved.
Your rags, your hunger, swift must be relieved!
You must have raiment, bread! O, take ye them!
(*She tears handsful of jewels from her mantle.*)
Take rubies, sapphires, beryl, every gem!
See, I tear off these jewels, heavy, vain!—
Gather them! Not in payment for your pain,
Ah, ye can take them, friends! I shall repay
Your love with love. There is no other way!
And here is chrysolite; here, opals shine!

My heart is there, among these gems of mine!
A snow of pearls! A rain of diamonds bright!
—Ah! Now my mantle is divinely light!

BERTRAND: And I? What shall I do?

MELISSINDE: With these men, go
Fight for the Cross!

ALL THE MARINERS: For the Cross! Onward! Ho!

THE MASTER: To-morrow, we will burn on yonder reef
Our glorious ship.

TROBALDO (*pointing to* BERTRAND): And follow this our Chief!

BERTRAND: Upon the Sepulchre we'll pluck our Palm.

MELISSINDE (*going back toward her galley*):
God guard you! Weep not! Peace shall be my balm.
I have learned at last why life to souls is given . . .

FRA TROPHIMUS (*kneeling by the body of* JOFFROY):
Yes, true love's travail does the work of heaven.

(*Curtain*)

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

An Evangel in Three Parts

In Verse

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Jesus.
Photine.
The Three Spectres.

Peter.
John.
James.
Andrew.
Nathaniel.
Bartholomew.
Judas.

Azriel.
The Centurion.
The Priest.
A Shepherd.
A Merchant.
Another.
The Keeper of the Gate.
Young Men.
The Ancients.

Young Girls.
Women.
Courtesans.
Children.
Disciples, Roman Soldiers, Merchants, Artisans.
All the Samaritan People.

FIRST PART

Jacob's Well

At the intersection of two highways which go, the one toward Mesopotamia, the other toward the Great Sea, Jacob's Well, not far from the town of Sichem in Samaria.

A huge, oblong well. A low curb on which one may sit.

A half-ruinous vault of stone still makes an arch over this well.

A rude well-sweep, with a cord by which water pots are lowered and raised.

A huge wild fig tree spreads its branches above it. There is also one of those olive trees whose leaves are more silvery in Samaria than anywhere else. Farther away, there are pine trees and the slim outlines of cypress trees.

At the back is a dust-besprinkled, grassy slope where the roads fork. A crooked footpath leads downward to the well, and behind the slope of the hill, the valley of Sichem is blue.

Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim bound the horizon. Gerizim lifts toward heaven the ruins of a temple. In the gap that divides the mountains, Sichem shows the square outlines of its houses.

Such will be the scene, when day breaks. But when the curtain rises, it is night. Beautiful, clear darkness. Stars. Near the well, in the black darkness of the vaulted arch, a vast phantom, with the white beard of a centenarian, leans, whitely, on a staff. A second phantom as huge, as white, stands motionless on a step. A third, like the other two, with the same white beard, the same shepherd's staff, advances mysteriously.

SCENE I

THE PHANTOMS

FIRST SHADE (*gliding toward the well*):
Borne upon the night wind's swell,
Vagabond till dawn of day,
What strange power do I obey,—
Ghost that can a ghost impell?
I come, I glimmer, and away.
Noiselessly my sandals fell. . . .
Great I AM to Whom I pray,
Who is this so ghostly gray,
Standing silent at the well?

SECOND SHADE (*to the first*):
White beard, in this night of dread,
Wanderer from the shores of hell,
Where a moonless sky guards well
Meadows that know no lily bell,—
Art thou a spectre?

FIRST SHADE: Thou hast said!

SECOND SHADE: My son, thy voice,—I know it well.

FIRST SHADE: Another shadow by those stones
Spectral and white, I dimly see.
Immobile phantom, hearest thou me?

THIRD SHADOW: Father, I know my father's tones.

SECOND SHADE: The younger son I love so well,
Surely I know that voice, O hark!

THIRD SHADOW: Beloved Father.

FIRST SHADE: Patriarch!

THIRD SHADE: Abraham!

SECOND SHADE: Isaac!

FIRST SHADE: Israel!

JACOB: By what sublime command
Do our dead feet now firmly stand
On the good earth once more?

AND YET I THINK IT TRUE.

ISAAC: Some mighty thing is planned.
An angel, darkly winged and grand,
Loosed with an all-compelling hand
Pale Sheol's door.
JACOB (*to* ABRAHAM): What newer hope is born?
Speak, thou, who late hast trod
Mamre's star-guarded plain.
Have messengers again
To thy wise age made plain
Plans of Almighty God?
ABRAHAM (*to* ISAAC): Why do you kiss the dust
That lies along the way?
ISAAC: I kneel because I must.
Strange dreams my spirit sway.
ABRAHAM (*to* JACOB): You kiss the rocky rim
Your own hands placed of yore.
JACOB: A Presence, wondrous, dim,
Compels me to adore.
You breathe the very air
As 'twere a holy thing.
ABRAHAM: I meet,—and kiss it there,—
The Voice that makes it ring.
ISAAC: A Voice, thou sayest, sire?
ABRAHAM: He comes,—the world's Desire.
Believe the token.
This night on Sheol's shore,
I passed his couch before,
And he who speaks no more,
Moses—has spoken.
JACOB (*prostrating himself, with* ISAAC):
Softly our hearts sing psalms.
ABRAHAM: Ere o'er the sun-gilt palms,
Again the night hangs blue,
Sichem, will come to you
Sighs sweeter than all balms,

Gifts beyond royal alms,
The power that stirred death's calms
Declares it true.

JACOB (*to* ISAAC): My Father, can it be
Of all wells built by hands,
This that I built in days of dearth
Obtains of God this awful worth,—
That by its brink He stands?

ISAAC: Rejoice, rejoice with holy mirth,
Son, to whose happy lot it fell
To build salvation's hallowed well
Where future ages come to draw.
Hither will thirsting thousands crowd.
Thy sire and grandsire may be proud.
A robe of glory is thy shroud
Whose like man never saw.

(*The stage is full of Phantoms.*)

JACOB: Look now what hosts arise
And hither come to draw.
Broken its builder's pitcher lies,
And yet I see, in wistful guise,
Drawn by some wondrous law,
Greater than death can be,
Throngs kiss its stones with awe!
Marvel without a flaw,
The grave has set its prisoners free:
Joseph and Joshua, O see.

ABRAHAM: Shadows who fill the misty way,
Kneel, ghostly ranks, kneel, kneel and pray,
Here at the Fount of Love!
(*A light dawns in the east*)
The day star now begins to burn
And shades to shadow must return,
When glows that light above.

JACOB: Soon of our shadows will remain
Less than a cloud bereft of rain,

Less than a waking dream,
Three floating beards, three wreaths of mist,
Dew-silver by the sunbeams kissed,
A vanished whiff of steam.

ISAAC: A crowd comes from afar.
Samaritans these are,
Weighted, yet driven, by fears.

ABRAHAM: Ages have looked in woe on them,
Samaritans who through the years
Tell still at dawn beneath these trees
The gnawing hate that knows no ease
Against Jerusalem.

JACOB: Soft, let us disappear! . . .
But witness, earth and skies,
Land full of mysteries,
Heaven with thy myriad eyes,
Hills, He is near.
Winds, hold your breath to hear,
Well, gush His draught to bear.
Skies, whose wise stars must know,
Searching my well below,
Who draws so near its rim;
Breezes that lightly skim
Paths whose young pine trees slim
Bend where His feet will tread,—
Ye saw the waiting Dead.
Now, living men instead
Wait upon Him.

SCENE II

The PRIEST, AZRIEL, *Young Men, Old Men, Merchants, etc.*

They come slowly, like a mourning train, and, stopping at the Well, they lament.

A MAN: Here is the well, the step, the curb, that mark
The labor of the hallowed patriarch,

The son of Isaac and of Abraham,
Whose work was honored of the Great I AM.

ANOTHER: Sadness of Leah,—these flowers breathe of it.

ANOTHER: In this dear dust did Rachael's shadow flit.

ANOTHER: This mountain bore God's ark upon its crest,
The while its bearers, breathless, stopped to rest.

ANOTHER: Caught in this thicket was the very ram
The angel showed to Father Abraham.

ANOTHER: This incense-laden breeze, this sweet perfume,
Comes from the flowers that grow at Joseph's tomb.

AN OLD MAN: Here Joshua and the Tribes set up their stones.

ANOTHER OLD MAN: That scent of immortelles our history owns.

A YOUNG MAN: The sun is golden with our glories here.

THE PRIEST: So, day by day and patient year on year,
Samaritans and men of Sichem, still
Hither we come to mourn our country's ill.

A MAN (*turning toward the ruins that crown Gerizim; all, following his example, prostrate themselves*):
Gerizim's temple, whose destruction dire
Filled Zion's courts with satisfied desire,
Still to their hatred are its stones misprized!

ANOTHER: Always they see in us a sect despised.

ANOTHER: To the true faith, say they with malice grim,
We hold false doctrines, strange to Elohim,—
Idols grotesque, and doctrines full of lies
Soukkoth-Benoth, . . .

ANOTHER: And Zeboub, god of flies.

FIRST OLD MAN: Liars! 'tis we alone who keep the faith.

SECOND OLD MAN: We guard the very word, as Moses saith,
True pentateuch, confined in faithful brass.

THE PRIEST: Upon the threshold that no man may pass,
Writ upon sheepskin, faithful to the least
Pen stroke, by Abischouah . . .

FIRST OLD MAN: Son of the high priest . . .
He, son of Aaron. . . .

SECOND OLD MAN: Moses' very brother.
A YOUNG MAN: Why are we, then, despised below all other?
ANOTHER: Burdened and hounded by the public scorn,
Hated beyond the veriest reptile born.
THE PRIEST: In a mean hovel we must house our cult.
FIRST OLD MAN: Romans oppress us, and the Jews insult.
A MAN: The Pharisee his cleansing bowl demands
If, on his walks, our wild flowers brush his hands.
ANOTHER: A ceremonial bath his body frees
From the polluting shadow of our trees.
A YOUNG MAN: 'Tis past endurance!
ANOTHER: Added to this thing
Is the foul shadow of the Eagle's wing.
ANOTHER: Let us revolt.
A MAN: Ah, cultivate our vines!
FIRST OLD MAN (*to the speaker*):
While shame our very nation undermines?
THE MAN: Well, . . .
FIRST OLD MAN: Does your spirit not rebel or shrink?
THE MAN: I try to drown my troubles . . .
FIRST OLD MAN: Yes, in drink.
THE MAN: Why has Mount Ebal on its noble slopes
So many vines, if not to feed man's hopes
And drown his cares? I am like Father Noah.
The pagans taught me how to shout "Evo ha!"
AZRIEL (*who until this moment has remained silent and dreamy*):
He's right. To strive is vain.
FIRST OLD MAN: Ah, no, not vain,
But difficult. Far sweeter, it is plain,
To lie in perfumed, supple arms. My son,
By noble anger human rights are won.
To seek Photine, bewitched by all the tricks
That won five other fools!
AZRIEL: Then count me six.
I love her, yes,—and what remains but love?

Endless and hopeless all our struggles prove.
If one true leader come,—here is my sword;
Meantime (*indicating the drunkard*)
our drowsy friend has given the word.
He finds forgetfulness in sleepy wine;
A subtler draught of lips and eyes is mine.

FIRST OLD MAN: Always we meet and always 'tis the same.
None has a plan.

A MERCHANT: Aye, but I have a game;
Flatter the Romans; gain them bit by bit,—
And then the Jews. Try if that coat will fit.

A MAN (*violently thrusting himself forward out of the crowd*):
You fear disorder. War's an ugly word.
It ruins trade. You love the Roman's sword;
It guards the dirty gold upon your tray.
What though its flat about your shoulders play!

THE MERCHANT: Oh, come . . .

THE MAN: Enough, I cry, revolt, without delay!
Judas the Gaulonite has led the way.
Pay no more taxes, render tithes no more,—
Salt, anise cumin,—all the silly store.

THE PRIEST: Thief and blasphemer! rioting for gain! . . .
You and your pack, get you to heel again!
This is *my* plan; bring gold and still more gold,
Rebuild our temple as it was of old.
To our long history add this splendid page.
The Jews would storm, Caiaphas die of rage.
We were avenged if on Gerizim's height
The feast of Purim once were held aright.
Rebuild the temple, friends. Greatest and least
Can join in this and choose a great High Priest.
Let golden stars above Gerizim's height
In hammered silver domes reflect their light.

THE MERCHANT: 'Neath that soft paw a glimpse of claws I caught.
What priest will set Caiaphas so at naught?

You want to wear the ephod, fold on fold,
The broidered purple heavy with its gold,
Pomegranates swaying 'twixt the golden bells,
The people pay,—if he the people sells.

THE PRIEST: Silence, vile huckster! To your counter! Go!

THE MAN (*who was talking to the merchant*):
Angry, because you dealt so true a blow;
You read his heart.

THE PRIEST: Bravo, I read your own.

THE MAN: Hypocrite!

THE PRIEST: Thief!

FIRST OLD MAN (*turning his face away*):
My very soul makes moan.

AZRIEL: 'Tis as I said. Where is there room for hope?
Blind with self-seeking, in the dark they grope.
Ashes like these have cooled my heart's young fire.
'Tis done. The country's dead.

A VOICE (*from the crowd*): And the Messiah?

ALL: What . . . what is that?

A SHEPHERD (*advancing*): I said . . . "And the Messiah?"

THE PRIEST: Ah, well . . .

THE SHEPHERD: You think He's coming? . . . What a silence fell.

THE PRIEST (*smiling*): Why, yes . . .

THE SHEPHERD: What say the prophets of our land's Desire?

THE PRIEST: Oh, surely, He will come, this great Messiah.
First He will tell the prophets and their sons,
And we'll prepare you.
(*Aside, to the priests about him.*) Oh, the simple ones!
Through all the ages, some are hoping still.

THE SHEPHERD: When will He come?

THE PRIEST: Why, surely, . . . When He will.

THE SHEPHERD: Vague promises that mean . . . not anything!
Now, what like will He be?

A YOUNG MAN: A warrior.

THE PRIEST: . . . Priest.

FIRST OLD MAN: He'll ride upon the clouds . . .
ANOTHER YOUNG MAN: Some fabled beast.
ANOTHER: There'll be two Christs.
ANOTHER: One.
DIVERSE VOICES: Two! . . . But one, I claim!
A MAN: Christ has already come.
MANY VOICES: What is His name?
A YOUNG MAN: Judas the Gaulonite.
ANOTHER: No, surely. John!
THE PRIEST: Christ will be strong and joyous!
AN OLD MAN: Weak and wan!
A YOUNG MAN: He will come if . . .
THE MERCHANT: 'Tis false. He will come, but . . .
THE SHEPHERD [(*While he speaks, on the footpath, at the top of the hill,* JESUS *appears with his Disciples*):]

You don't believe in Christ. There's just a rut
Where, in your minds, you roll the old dispute.
I speak his name. You quarrel or are mute.
I tell you, He is coming. Learned minds
See not. The heart sees. What it seeks, it finds.
What will He be? I know not. That is dim.
I care not. He will be what pleases Him.
By what right do you speak, who gather here
To preach what interest bids you hope or fear?
We seek surcease of bitter suffering.
What idle crumbs of comfort do ye fling?
He comes, I tell you. Oh, Samaritans,
The shepherd knows the skies he nightly scans,
He comes,—to breathe on you His breath of wrath
And make you less than stubble in His path.
—Your empty boasting, and your lusty greed.
His feet are on the threshold. At our need,—
Our bitter need—He comes. And watching so,
What need have we of signs. His own will know.

THE PRIEST: How, then?

THE SHEPHERD: A word . . . a gesture. Who can say?
JESUS (*above on the hill, pointing to Sichem*):
Sir, is this Sichem?
THE SHEPHERD (*turning*): Stranger, go thy way!

SCENE III

The Same, JESUS *and His Disciples*

THE PRIEST: Jews! They are Jews!
ALL (*shouting*): Infidels! Let's give chase!
THE PRIEST: Ignore them.
THE MERCHANT: With disdain let's give them place.
AZRIEL: I shall remain.
A YOUNG MAN: Why?
AZRIEL: She is coming here,
To fill her water pot.
THE YOUNG MAN: Come, man, and make it clear
Not one will stay.
ANOTHER: Let's take him.
PETER (*to the Samaritans, as they withdraw*):
What, you go
Without an answer?
ANDREW: We are hungry.
A SAMARITAN: So?
Find berries in the briers.
THE DRUNKARD: If prices bar,
No Jew should trade in Sichem.
PETER (*insultingly*): In *Sichar.*
AN OLD MAN: My city, how that name dishonors thee!
A YOUNG MAN: Take heed, you boasters, lest some day you see
Your ancient temple full of rotting bones.
PETER (*angrily*): Oh . . .
THE PRIEST (*restraining the youth*): Leave them alone.
A SAMARITAN: God hates its very stones.

PETER: Thou liest. (*Calling after them.*)
There is but one.
THE VOICE OF A SAMARITAN (*from afar*):
And that one, ours.

SCENE IV

JESUS *and His Disciples*

PETER (*coming down*): Curses upon this land; till plague devours
What grasshoppers refuse to eat thereof!
JAMES (*the same*): Their crops be killed with hailstones from above,
And maggots at their roots, by heaven sent!
ANDREW (*the same*): Their wives be barren, young men impotent.
O may they know all hunger and all thirst.
May enemies invade them as at first.
Where Sichar stands, let reeking ruins be!
PETER: Never again beneath an almond tree
Let one of them lie mumbling and at ease.
Curse rocks and fields and houses, crops and trees!
Curse all my eyes behold! Curse this whole area!
Curse root and stock and branch!
JESUS: God bless Samaria. [*He comes down.*]
PETER: What, Rabbi? But your rules for us began,
"Go not to gentiles nor Samaritan,
But to the wandering sheep of Israel."
ANDREW: You hate these heathen.
JESUS: Nay, I love them well.
PETER: But your words, Rabbi,—telling us to win
Israel's lost sheep?
JESUS: I bade you to *begin*
With those, your brethren. For I know your heart.
Not finding room for all, I gave you part.
If I had said, "Love all my Father's sons,"
Ye too had been offended, little ones.

Ye groped, aye, bravely, on your shadowed way.
I might have blinded you with sudden day.
And could I feed your weakness on My wine,
So new, so strong? Nay, children, ye are mine,
But light must filter in, and I must spare
To give too much at first. But now, I dare.

ANDREW: What, not to be a Jew, and yet to be . . .

JESUS: Elisha healed the Syrian's leprosy.

PETER: We've got to love them? Can it ever be?

JESUS: You will love all men, having first loved Me.

PETER: What is it you ask?

JESUS: Perfection, Simon! Oh,
It is no easy road on which ye go.
I bid you love your neighbors.

PETER: If we can.
Who is my neighbor, Lord?

JESUS: A certain man
Went from Jerusalem to Jericho.
Robbers waylaid him, stripped his raiment off,
Wounded, and left him so.
The echoes seemed to scoff.
He lay, half dead.
His wounds gaped sore and wide.
A priest came by. Seeing the ground so red,
He chose the other side.
A Levite came. He saw the dimming eye.
He, too, passed by.
By the same road, came a Samaritan,
He saw the man:
Filled with compassion, hastened to his side;
Poured oil and wine to stanch the wound so wide;
Lifted him gently, set him on his beast,
And let him ride,
And lest his mule should stumble in the least,
He walked beside.

He brought him to an inn, put him to bed,
And when the dawn was red,
Said to the good man there,
"Let him have every care
When I go hence.
Here are two pence.
And what thou spendest more, will I repay."
And so this—heathen—went upon his way.
Which, think you, of these three,
Look in your hearts and see,—
Was, in God's sight
A neighbor to this man,—
The priest, the Levite,
The Samaritan?

PETER: But, . . .

JESUS: Have ye understood?

JAMES: Yes, Lord.

JOHN (*to* JESUS, *leading him to the well-curb*): Come, rest.
The way was long and rough.

ANDREW: And sore oppressed,
They say, with robbers bands. They keep the pass;
One,—I forget his name,—

JESUS (*gently*): 'Tis Barabbas.

JOHN (*kneeling beside him*):
You stopped yourself to ask that man the way,
When you were telling us,—speak on, we pray,—
The parable of him who sowed the grain.

JESUS (*smiling*): What must I tell you?

JOHN: None of it was plain.

JESUS: I sow the seed.

PETER (*sitting at His feet*): The field . . .

JESUS: Is everywhere.

ANDREW (*seating himself as close to His feet as he can*):
The crop?

JESUS: My children make the harvest fair.

JAMES: (*the same*): The other grain . . .?

JESUS: The wicked one has sown,
And while ye sleep, among you it is strown.
BARTHOLOMEW: The harvesters . . .?
JESUS: The angels, O my sheaves,
Will fill my Father's storehouse to the eaves.
PETER: I'll guard my field! Oh, I will never sleep!
JESUS: Thou wilt sleep, Simon. But this lesson keep
Well in your hearts; the husbandman forbears
To weed his field in haste, lest, gathering tares,
He kill the wheat, as oft the foolish do.
At harvest time he separates the two.
NATHANIEL (*with melancholy fervor*):
How good wheat smells, fresh taken from the mill!
I'm hungry.
JESUS: Ask of heaven what you will.
That cloud could drop down manna honey-sweet.
PETER: You believe that?
JESUS: Ask, Cephas.
PETER: At my feet? . . .
JESUS: Yes.
PETER: Manna for us?
JESUS: As fresh as dew in May.
PETER: But . . .
JESUS: Pray.
PETER: Still . . .
JESUS: Pray . . .
PETER: I . . .
JESUS: Pray.
PETER (*without conviction*):
Kind Heaven, rain, from out they vast blue dome
The Hebrew's ancient food.
(*After an interval*) It doesn't come.
JESUS: Because you prayed and doubted. That is death,
The life of every prayer is only faith
Speak to its massy rock undoubtingly
And Mount Gerizim marches to the sea.

Go, ye of little faith, and buy your bread.
I will read here a book no eye hath read.
Go, James, Nathanæl, Peter, Judas, John . . .
(*They go off.*)

JESUS (*to* PETER, *who lingers, altogether discomfited*):
Simon, the angels who today look on,
Will feed your hunger with their wide-spread wings,
Assuage your thirst with harps of myriad strings.
By winds and harmonies the soul is fed,—
But now, beloved, go, . . . and buy your bread.
(*The Disciples go off, some toward the town, others toward the field.* JESUS *is left alone.*)

JESUS: I am weary. Yes, but therefore was I born.
My hands are torn by many a wayside thorn;
My feet are blistered by the rocks they pressed,
But from my bruised body is exprest
Some wine of healing, as from trodden grapes.
In the winepress poured, the purple juice escapes.
From willing weariness some help will flow
To these, my brethren, While I walk below,
Each pang I bear has some result divine,
And I, O Father, conquer by this sign.
Now that I almost faint from weariness,
Thy love will send some token of success . . .
Straight fall the sunbeams. 'Tis the bright sixth hour.
A flute-like voice drifts like a breeze-tossed flower.
A woman comes from Sichem. Past the turn,
Hither she comes to draw. . . . The sun's rays burn.
(*He has sat down again on the well-curb.*)
So near she is that I can see her plain,
The silken girdle and the golden chain.
The veil enshadows, but hides not her grace,—
My Father's gift to all the Hebrew race.
I hear her silvern anklets softly ring.
Jacob, thy daughters, coming to this spring,
Always, advancing with unhurried tread,

Poising the jar on nobly lifted head,
Come, with grave smiles and half mysterious air;
Conforming to the graceful urns they bear,
Their bodies, slender vases; handle-wise
Their curved arms lifted to the brooding skies.
(*At this moment, the Samaritan Woman appears at the top of the hill, on the footpath.*)
Immortal splendour of this gesture free!
Always it seems most beautiful to Me,
This gesture every Hebrew woman learns,
Bearing to wayside wells the heavy urns,
For with that very gesture,—Ah, I know,—
A Hebrew maid came, thirty years ago,
The little, gentle handmaid of the Lord,
As yet untroubled by the wondrous word
That Gabriel bore her, in the Almighty's name.
So with her cruise my lovely Mother came.
This woman is a sinner. Carelessly,—
—A vase that knows not the divinity
Her bare arms raised to Heaven yet dimly proves,—
She sings, while dreaming of unworthy loves.

SCENE V

JESUS; PHOTINE

PHOTINE (*coming down the footpath*):

O take ye the foxes that ravage the vines . . .
This love is a weight on the heart.
Bring me grapes, O my love . . . We will perish, apart
All gifts are my true lover's signs.
Oh, take ye the foxes that ravage the vines.

At my lattice at eve he has spoken to me;
"Arise up, my fair one, and come, O my love.
The winter is past, clouds are lost in the sea;
'Tis the time, 'tis the time of the dove.

Then come, O my dear, to the meadows with me
And there I will show you a dove.
A fig tree drops sweetness and all is for thee.
Arise, O my fair one, my love.
The winter is past, clouds are drowned in the sea."

JESUS: A soul light as a wreath that withereth.
PHOTINE (*She has reached the well, and, without seeing* JESUS, *she fastens the amphora to the windlass and slowly lets it down*):

I slept. But sometimes when I sleep
My heart awakes with every breath.
"Open, my soul, my flower, I keep
Vigil for thee," my lover saith.

Oh, but I spake forbiddingly,
—Dear, well-known voice!—"Who makes such din?
My robe's cast off. It cannot be.
Naked I cannot let you in."

My feet are bathed with mountain snow,
My feet are laved with perfumes sweet.
How can I come to open so,—
The black, black stone! My white, white feet!

How,—But I opened wide the door.
Against his might I am so weak!
Gone,—gone! I cannot find him more.
Nightlong for my lost love I seek.

('Gainst the locked door, in fierce despair
My hands beat, dropping down their myrrh.)
I weep in my wild, roughened hair,
And tear the lips that dared demur.

JESUS: Not for a moment has she turned to Me.
PHOTINE: *Like a roe, like a hart, will my love ever flee?*
JESUS: Slowly the heavy jar begins to rise.
PHOTINE (*Turning the heavy wooden windlass that draws up the rope*):

My well beloved—afar I roved—when dawn was clear,
A-seeking thee. Thou camest to me. And daylight dies.
Yet in this night—a magic light—my need supplies.
I hold thee here.
Here in my eyes.

Balsam and myrrh my senses stir. Lo, 'tis thy sighs.
Thy name, my lord, as ointment poured, is sweet to me;
Thy lightest word with honey stored, my almond tree,
And thy clear eyes
Hold heaven for me.

Like lute unstrung, like fruit wind-flung, my heart lies low,
Low at thy feet. Ah, lift it, sweet! and let me rest.
Spikenard and balm my bosom calm, so light you pressed.
Ah, be a signet
On my breast!

JESUS: The water jar is looking glass for her.
PHOTINE: *Like a signet of brass, like a bundle of myrrh.*
JESUS: In the cool water, empty smiles she flashes,
Admires the dye upon her sweeping lashes,
Looks at her nails whereon a few drops fell,
—And the world's Saviour waits beside the well!
(PHOTINE *lifts her water jar and moves away*)
She is going—type of poor humanity
That almost finds the Way, but heedlessly
Chooses the by-path.
(PHOTINE *goes up the footpath, humming her broken song.*)
If I make no sign,
She too will go away. Yet all are mine—

(PHOTINE *is nearly out of sight.*)
O Woman,—I am athirst. The sun is very hot!
Give me to drink, I pray.

PHOTINE: The Jews deal not,
—He is a Jew, this thirsty, wayworn man,—
With Sichemite or with Samaritan.
Little or large, all dealings they decline.
Our bread, they say, smells of the flesh of swine.
Honey from Sichem hives the Jews refuse;
They say it tastes of blood. My dripping cruise
Came from Samaria's tainted well but now.
A heathen bears it on her unclean brow.
You should refuse it, finding it to stink,
Instead of asking for . . .

JESUS: Give Me to drink!

PHOTINE: Has your great thirst your teaching so refuted?
Know, Jew, that you would be the less polluted
Handling foul vermin, reptiles poisonous,
Than being succoured so by one of us.
(*With quarrelsome volubility.*)
Stay till tomorrow. Either sit or stand.
I'll not let down my pitcher to my hand.
'Tis on my shoulder. There it will remain.
Ho, Eleazar, lacking gifts and train!
I'm not Rebecca, as you seem to think.
Be thirsty if you will. You shall not drink.
(*Coming back a little way.*)
You see this water,—clear, so pure, so clear,
The cruise seems empty, though I filled it here,
So cool one sees the moisture on the cruise;
Silver and pearl this draught—which I refuse.
O Beggar, hear the thirst-provoking sound,
The tinkle, tinkle, in its depths profound,—
Light as a draught distilled of summer air!
No water is so cool, so clear, so fair.
Ah, well, for you, the Law, be very sure,
Says that this purest water is impure!

JESUS: Woman . . .
PHOTINE: I'd rather pour it on the sod
Than give . . .
JESUS: If you but knew the gift of God,
And Who brings light when in the dark you shrink—
And Who He is that says Give me to drink;
Who sitteth here upon the well's wide rim,
He would not ask of thee, but thou of Him.
PHOTINE: You speak in riddles just to make me heed.
JESUS: I would give living waters to thy need.
PHOTINE: Stranger, I listen, for I have no choice,
Some Influence masters me,—your eyes, your voice.
You speak of living waters. Yet you keep
Nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.
Whence hast thou then that water, wondrous Jew?
—It must be false and yet I think it true,—
Is there, in all the sources of Judea,
Water as limpid as this water here?
People an hour away come here to draw.
Our father Jacob built it, when he saw
The land athirst. Here drank his mighty sons,
Their wives, their servants, and their little ones.
Most famous of all famous springs and wells.
What is it this mysterious stranger tells?
Here Jacob's cattle ages since were fed,
Art greater then than Jacob?
JESUS: Thou has said.
PHOTINE: In your cupped hands a little I will pour
Then you will see . . .
JESUS: He thirsteth nevermore
Whom I have given to drink. With how much pain
You come to draw again and yet again,
But whoso drinks the living draught I give
Within himself shall welling fountains live,
And life eternal from those waters brim,
If he but drink the draught I bring to him.

PHOTINE: What! For eternity to have no thirst?
A good thing to believe,—if one but durst.
Elijah's draught lasted a wondrous while
When he was in the desert. Ah, you smile?
Some learning to this woman you must grant,—
He went for forty days and did not want.
You've learned his secret in your wandering?
O Master, lead me to that hidden spring.
Show me this wonder that your wanderings saw,
That I thirst not, nor hither come to draw.
JESUS: Hearing, thou hearest not, nor givest heed
To any thirst but that of fleshly need.
PHOTINE: Give me this water. Stranger, I implore,—
This living water, that I thirst no more.
JESUS: Go, call thy husband and return to Me.
PHOTINE: My husband?
JESUS: Go.
PHOTINE: But I . . . but I
JESUS: I see,
Thou art ashamed.
PHOTINE: I have no husband.
JESUS: Verily,
Thou saidest truly. Five men by that name
Were called, and thou wouldst call this sixth the same.
PHOTINE: Master . . .
JESUS: Thou saidest truly, yea, and well.
Thou hast no husband, it is truth you tell.
That holy name thou hast no right to speak.
PHOTINE: Master.
JESUS: Five men have had thee. Didst thou seek
God's blessing, or the blessing of God's priest?
Troops of young friends and wholesome marriage feast?
Torches? . . .
PHOTINE: O Master.
JESUS: Merry dulcimer,
Jests gay and tender; tremblings sweet, to stir
The myrtle crown set on thy drooping head? . . .

PHOTINE: Lord, Lord! a prophet surely, who hast read . . .
JESUS: Thou callest Me prophet since I know thy heart.
It is but part, and such a little part,
If thou wilt learn, of things that I can show.
PHOTINE: O Master, canst thou tell? . . .
JESUS: What wouldst thou know?
PHOTINE: 'Tis this: You Jews our whole religion spurn
Because we worship here, and yet we learn
That your forefathers,—who are also ours,—
Worshipped here only. Have the heavenly powers
So changed? The priests and doctors understand.
We common folk, beset on either hand,
Wishing to kneel upon the holy mount,
Are told of two, that two high priests account
Holy,—yet each declares there is but one,
Ancient and chosen of God, beneath the sun.
"Pray on this mountain." "No, pray on the other,"
And so, we climb not neither one nor t'other. . . .
So, always in the valley I have trod. . . .
And . . . plucking flowers there . . . I forgot my God.
JESUS: Be of good comfort, for the hour is nigh
When all will worship God, both low and high,
Not at Gerizim, or Jerusalem.
In little Sichem, little Bethlehem,
Wherever any humble soul finds space
To speak to God. He dwells not in one place.
God is a Spirit. They who worship Him
Will never reach Him at the horizon's rim.
The Spirit goes where never foot has trod.
Nowhere, and Everywhere, man finds his God.
PHOTINE: I have lived far from God. I can receive
Only a little, but I do believe
Three things: the dead will some day come again;
Angels have visited this mortal plain,
And—fairest, surest hope beneath the sun,—
I wait the coming of the Promised One,
Await and love Him, L'Ha-Schaab, Christ, Messiah!

JESUS (*lifting His eyes to heaven*):
The humblest, always! At my deep desire!
I thank Thee, Father!
(*To* PHOTINE.)
What thinkst thou of Christ?
PHOTINE: That He will come.
JESUS: And then?
PHOTINE: Why that sufficed.
He is coming.
JESUS: Coming . . . yes. . . . What will He bring?
PHOTINE: I think He comes to teach us everything.
JESUS: Hear her, O Father!
Woman, have no fear.
Thou sayest the words that I have longed to hear.
Lift up thy head. Behold thy soul's Desire.
I—I that speak—am He. I am Messiah.
PHOTINE (*starts back, then, stammering, sinks to her knees*):
Thou! . . . I . . . Ha-Schaab! . . . Messiah! . . .
Emanuel!
JESUS: Jesus.
PHOTINE (*on her knees*): Thou well-beloved.
JESUS (*watching her*): A hush of silence fell.
PHOTINE (*sings suddenly*):

My well-beloved, long, long I roved, when dawn was clear,
A-seeking Thee. Thou came to me. The old day dies.
Into my night, a magic Light my need supplies.
I have Thee here,
Before my eyes.

Balsam and myrrh my spirit stir. Lo, 'tis Thy sighs.
Thy name, my Lord, as ointment poured, is balm to me,
Thy gentle word with perfume stored. Thou Myrtle tree.
Thy clear eyes
Open Heaven for me.

My heart lies low;

My God, what have I done?
For Him the same song, Oh, the very one!
Oh, sacrilege! The idle words and free!

JESUS: All words of love must speak at last of Me.
One must to Me the halting words address
To know the fullness of their tenderness.

PHOTINE: Master, adoring, I could but repeat
The words I knew. . . .

JESUS: I know. The gift was sweet.
. I have received it.

PHOTINE: Oh, the old words came
With this new Love! Oh, shame!

JESUS: Nay, feel no shame.
The love of Me comes always to a heart
Where lesser, human loves have had a part,
In the old lamp, a newer light discloses,
Makes fadeless garlands from life's fading roses:
Lo, I make all things new. Let none retard
Breaking the box of aloes or of narl.
The merchant sold it for its savour sweet,
But penitents expend it at my feet.
My feet are rested, where this gift is spread,
Wiped with the tresses of an humbled head.
Think not thy song is shameful in My eyes.
The soul that finds Me, in its first surprise,
Knows not its new song, though it stirs within.
Trembling, confused, rejoiced, it must begin
Some fragment of the song it learned elsewhere,
And, lo! the love-song has become a prayer!

PHOTINE: "Who drinks the living water that I give
Shall never thirst." I thirst no more! I live, . . .
I'd weep upon Thy hands. Ah, thought, too, free!
How good He is! He holds them out to me! . . .
Lord, for the first time—O the very first,
I thirst no more, who was devoured with thirst!
I sought the broken cisterns every one.

I drank,—and thirsted ere the draught was done!
Sometimes I thought I loved. To love, I knew,
Would slake my thirst. That love was never true.
It left me parched and dry,—a tortured thing.
Someone would tell me of another spring.
Hope of new cisterns sunk in newer lands
Drove me, my empty pitcher in my hands.
Always I found the old, old, weary road,
Cattle that browsed or drew their heavy load,
The stunted olive trees along the way,
A sky of azure or a sky of gray;
With the old gesture, though my soul would tire,
I lowered the empty cruise of my desire;
Always I found the same deceitful thing,—
Roiled, brackish waters from a troubled spring.
From my hot lips the faithless pitcher fell.
Always my cruise was broken at the well!

JESUS: What need, Photine, to tell Me? For I knew.

PHOTINE: And now my soul seems bathed with morning dew.
Out of my shadows I have caught the gleam,
The rainbow arc above the living stream.
Gush, Spring of Love, and mount in jets of faith
And fall in drops of hope, dispelling death.
Sing, Living Water. Cast upon my soul
And all its dust, the flood that makes me whole!

JESUS: Thou seekest new words for the new thoughts that rise,
But I rejoice to see thy tear-dimmed eyes.

PHOTINE: My worthless words! My eyes not fit to see!

JESUS: All tear-dimmed eyes are beautiful to me.
Strive not for words. I understand your tear.

PHOTINE: O teach me.

JESUS: For that cause, I waited here.
When my disciples come, who went to buy
Food in the village, leave me.

PHOTINE (*with a gesture toward the cruise*): Master, I
Gave you no water,—Thou who givest Salvation!

JESUS: I thirsted only for your salutation.
PHOTINE: 'Tis true. I offer water to the River.
JESUS: I quench my thirst if I a soul deliver.
PHOTINE: Here at Thy feet, I wait.
JESUS: The air is blue.
Silence enfolds us. I will speak to you
Of My new Kingdom; how man grows divine;
The wheat and tares; the branches and the vine.
PHOTINE: I listen.
JESUS: I will tell you of the seed;
The leavened meal; the pearl; and, if you heed,—
PHOTINE: I listen!
JESUS: —I will teach you how to pray;
Tell of the flock left for one lamb astray,
Until the Shepherd found and brought it home.
PHOTINE: I listen!
JESUS: How the King again will come;
Of roads, one safe, and small, one wide and broad,
And of My Father.
PHOTINE: O, I listen, Lord.

(*Curtain*)

SECOND PART

The Gate of Sichem

Behind the curtain, a tumult of gay voices, strange cries, songs, laughter.

When the curtain rises, one sees the Market Place at the Gate of Sichem.

A wide space upon which many narrow streets converge. Flat-roofed houses, narrow little staircases in the outer walls. Right, the house of Photine.

At the back, the city gate; a vaulted arch dark and deep behind which one has a glimpse of open country, and surmounting which is the house of Schoer, *the gate-keeper; a turret whence he can see the surrounding country.*

Rumble of caravansary, flutter of bright colours, innumerable tradesmen; stalls, booths; piles of sacks, boxes and jars.

In the background, the Elders are gravely grouped. They sit in the gates for their business. Children play about. Young men amuse themselves trying to lift the heavy stones. Women and young girls chatter at the stalls.

Peter *and the Disciples are there to buy food, repulsed and railed at by the tradesfolk. The* Priest *in the background with the Elders.*

SCENE I

Peter, *the Disciples, the Crowd*

Cries of the Merchants: Wheat! Honey! Milk! Fruit! Rice! Fresh rekikim.

Peter: It makes me hungrier to follow him.

Andrew: Let's go away.

Peter: No, try again!

ANDREW: No use;
They mock at us.
A MERCHANT: Oil cakes; fresh lemon juice!
ANDREW (*eagerly*): How much?
A YOUNG MAN (*in passing*): They're Jews. Get from them all you can.
(*The Disciples turn away.*)
ANOTHER MERCHANT (*to the passing crowd*): Dye for eyelashes!
ANOTHER: Arrow shafts! Young man,
Strong reeds of Merom! Arrow shafts! Who'll buy?
PETER (*to* NATHANAEL): There is a good old man. Perhaps—you try,—
He'll sell his figs . . .
ANOTHER MERCHANT: Fard for the nails, young maid!
ANDREW (*while* NATHANAEL *talks to the old vender*):
I am faint with hunger.
PETER (*to* NATHANAEL, *who rejoins them*):
Tell us, would he trade?
NATHANAEL: He said, "Go shake the trees, you Jewish fool."
JOHN: I die of thirst.
A MERCHANT (*crying his wares*): Cucumbers! Fresh and cool!
PETER (*resignedly*): Let's try to buy a fish.
A YOUNG GIRL (*questioning another of her group*): O Noemi,
What will your lover give you?
NOEMI: Guess.
THE GIRL: A cap?
NOEMI (*shaking her head*): Uh-um.
ANOTHER GIRL: A wooden shoe to make a clap?
NOEMI: You tease!
ANOTHER: Better than that? A brazen mirror?
NOEMI: Guess!
ANOTHER: A ring?
NOEMI: An ivory nose ring, nothing less!
ALL (*dazzled*): Oh!
PETER (*back; to the fishmonger*): Three shekels for this tunny?

THE MERCHANT: Four is right.
A MAN (*with a couple of birds on his shoulder*):
Who wants to see my pretty finches fight?
(*A circle is quickly formed around him.*)
PETER (*to the Disciples*): Let's go.
ANDREW: What have we bought?
NATHANAEL: Some rice,—a little bit.
PETER: Dusty.
JAMES: A cheese.
PETER: Mouldy.
ANDREW: Some fruit.
PETER: Not fit
To eat.
JOHN (*showing a straggly bunch of dried-up grapes*):
This bunch of grapes.
PETER: And none supposes
That these are Eachol's famous grapes, by Moses!
It wouldn't take two spies to bring them back.
(*To a Disciple.*) And, Judas, how much silver in the sack?
THE DISCIPLE (*showing an empty sack*): Nothing.
(*They all gather around and look.*)
PETER: Already?
ANDREW (*shaking his head*): Hum!
JAMES (*whispering*): I know his wiles.
He is a thief.
JOHN: The Master says, and smiles,
"He must love money if the work be done."
PETER: Come!
THE CROWD (*yelling as the Disciples go through the Gate*):
They are running! Dogs! Thieves! Swine!
PETER (*softly to* JOHN): O, John,
It's my belief one finds . . .
THE CROWD: The scurvy Jews!
PETER: Since time began—
Only in parables, the *good* Samaritan.

SCENE II

The Same, lacking the Disciples

(AZRIEL *has stopped in front of* PHOTINE'S *house, Right.*)

AZRIEL (*to a servant who appears on the threshold*):
She is still at Jacob's well?
THE SERVING WOMAN: She's still there, master.
ONE WOMAN (*to another*):
Watch Azriel. He thinks it great disaster
Because Photine . . .
THE OTHER: Oh, speak not of Photine!
THE FIRST: The world is honey for that libertine!
A THIRD: Our honest days before the dawn begin,
And while we cook and scrub and mend and spin,
There are soft words for women of that ilk,
Almonds for food and dresses all of silk.
AZRIEL: When will she come back?
(*Calling to the Gate-keeper.*)
O! What ho, Schoer!
You on your turret, who can see so far,
Is Photine coming? Tell me what you see.
SCHOER: She isn't coming.
FIRST WOMAN (*to the second*): Listen, honey bee!
Isn't it vexing?
THE SECOND (*whispering*): Olive branch, they say
The end is near. She waxes every day
More wanton. They will drive her from the city?
THE THIRD: Who?
THE FIRST: Why, the Elders.
THE THIRD: Truly?
THE FIRST: Without pity.
You see, they're whispering now. Of her.
THE SECOND: I think it's time!
All Sichem stinks with that bold harlot's crime.
Isn't it so, dear Palm tree?
THE FIRST: Yes, my pearl!

THE THIRD: If God His wrath against us all should hurl,
Photine would be to blame—her ogling eyes!
ANOTHER: Her clothes might call down lightning from the skies.
ANOTHER: A shameless hussy!
ANOTHER: Child of Lucifer!
THE FIRST: And God may punish us to punish her!
THE SECOND: I'd kill the strumpet if a look could blast!
AZRIEL (*to the servant*): I'll go to meet her.
SCHOER (*leaning from the tower*): Here she comes at last!
AZRIEL: You see her?
SCHOER: Yes. She makes the strangest signs.
She has left the path. She is running through the vines,
And the young wheat. I see her. How she flies!
AZRIEL: It can't be she!
SCHOER: It is! I still have eyes!
Her hair is flying. She is very near.
How pale she is!
AZRIEL: It isn't she!
SCHOER: She is here.
(PHOTINE *appears in the gate, running; she stops in the gateway, panting.*)

SCENE III

The Same. PHOTINE

AZRIEL: 'Tis thou! Oh, I trembled, I feared, I can't tell
What I suffered! Where wast thou? 'Twas not at the well,
For thou bearest no cruise, not a jar, not a thing,
To hold water.
PHOTINE: And yet it is water I bring.
AZRIEL: Dear, why did thou run so?
PHOTINE: They perish of thirst.
AZRIEL: So thou camest . . .
PHOTINE: From the Well.
AZRIEL: Jacob's Well?

PHOTINE: So they called it at first.
They used that name once.
AZRIEL (*laughing*): And today they still use.
PHOTINE: No.
AZRIEL: Where is thy veil?
PHOTINE: Fallen off!
AZRIEL: And thy cruise?
PHOTINE: And my cruise?
AZRIEL: Sweet, what wast thou doing? I sought . . .
PHOTINE: I was found.
AZRIEL: Didst thou carry thy pitcher?
PHOTINE: Why, yes, I was bound
For the Well.
AZRIEL: But 'twas left . . .
PHOTINE: Where my old self was left.
AZRIEL: More riddles. I seem of my senses bereft.
PHOTINE: Poor Azriel!
AZRIEL: I love thee!
PHOTINE: No, no. I had gleams,
As you lay in my arms, of your thoughts, of your dreams,
—When lip touches lip, souls are meeting instead,
And the breast where it lies knows the thoughts of the head!—
I bid you remember and every-hope set
On all that you hoped I could make you forget!
The dream you rejected for me, I restore.
(*She cries aloud.*) O People.
AZRIEL: What sayst thou?
PHOTINE: Like waves on the shore
You ebb and you flow, noisy, heedless and gay!
A MAN: Photine! It's improper to hear what you say.
PHOTINE: O women, who chaffer and laugh as you trade!
A WOMAN: She accosts honest women and is not afraid.
AZRIEL: Hush! Take care, dear.
PHOTINE: Ye Elders, ye Scribes of the Law,
Ye Doctors, ye Priests.
AN ELDER: You are judged by that Law.

PHOTINE: Ye Merchants.
A MERCHANT (*maliciously*): Photine will be marked if she can.
PHOTINE: By the gray Well of Jacob, there sits a young man,
A pale Nazarene with a wonderful word.
He spoke—to me—gently. My spirit is stirred.
New joy, and new grief, He can rouse or assuage.
His gesture is one that sets open a cage!
THE CROWD (*laughing*): Ha! ha!
PHOTINE: I believe 'tis that Prophet. He knew
All that ever I did! All my sins! I speak true.
And deep in my heart, He has read a desire
For holier things. Is not this the Messiah?
A MAN: The woman is mad!
ANOTHER: What trick will she try?
ANOTHER (*laughing*): Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!
A MERCHANT: My pigeons! Who'll buy?
ANOTHER MERCHANT: Two sparrows! A bargain! A cheap sacrifice!
PHOTINE: Have pity and listen!
A PURCHASER: How much for this spice?
THE MERCHANT: Twelve sekels.
PURCHASER: At that price, you never can sell.
PHOTINE: A young Man is sitting by Jacob's gray well.
He calls His name Jesus. He comes from Judea.
He asked me for water.—And I would not hear.
Then, gracious and lovely, He stood by the brink,
And, having no pitcher, He gave me to drink.
A WOMAN (*to a vender*): A fine necklace.
ANOTHER: Phœnician?
THE MERCHANT: You ladies admire
Fine work.
PHOTINE: Don't you wish that it *might* be Messiah?
A YOUNG MAN: Messiah? He will come after you and I rot.
ANOTHER (*catching up with a group*):
Better come see the bird fight. I almost forgot!

PHOTINE: O listen, ye wretched! Ye people, I bring
Such wonderful news!
A MERCHANT: I am tired of this thing!
ANOTHER MERCHANT: Be silent.
PHOTINE: I cannot keep silence!
FIRST MERCHANT: Here, go!
That's enough.
PHOTINE: I cannot. I must speak what I know.
I must cry the good news. Ye reject, ye despise,
Yet still through the crowd there will echo my cries.
Near the gray Well of Jacob there sits a young man.
A glory is about His head.
The eyebrows o'er His clear eyes spread
Are like the rainbow's span.

Meek, yet He seems to hold a palm
Shadowed by royal state.
One knows Him by His royal calm.
'Tis He whom we await!

A far-off song comes on a breeze
Across Engeddi's bowers—
New beauty wakes in flute and flowers.
His grace is like to these.

And oh, His heavenly gentleness.
New milk, . . . a sun-bright dove, . . .
In purity, in loveliness,
Are shadows of His love.

A MERCHANT: She makes them listen.
ANOTHER MERCHANT: She is hurting trade!
A MAN (*bitterly to the merchants*):
Yes,—and why tell new hopes to souls afraid
When sweets and gewgaws might be bought and sold?

ANOTHER (*to the* HIGH PRIEST, *who draws near, attracted by the noise*): She speaks of Christ.
THE PRIEST: Who?
PHOTINE: I!
THE PRIEST: 'Tis very bold.
You speak of Christ? Do you know Who He is?
No man may speak of him who has not this,
Piety, learning,—skill to learn by rote
All teachers once declared and prophets wrote
About Messiah. No woman has this learning.
PHOTINE: I have a word, here in my memory burning.
'Tis written, "When Emanuel shall come
The blind will see the lame in dances turning;
The deaf will hear Hosannahs of the dumb."
THE PRIEST: She caught some text that I have used myself.
AN OLD MAN: This ignorant?
A YOUNG MAN: She seems beside herself!
ANOTHER: Surely her lips are touched with altar fire!
PHOTINE: "I give you hearts of flesh in this new day;
Your hearts of stone will melt with pure desire,
And ye will walk with Me the Living Way,
One people with one God, . . . with one Messiah!"
THE PRIEST: Ezekiel's vision. She who quotes indeed
Has read his words.
AZRIEL: She has not learned to read.
THE PRIEST: Whence has she then these scriptures to repeat?
PHOTINE: "How fair upon the mountains are the feet
Of those who bring good tidings! Hail to them!"
THE PRIEST: Isaiah said that.
PHOTINE: "Little Bethlehem,
Thou who wast least, the greatest thou shalt be."
THE PRIEST: Silence!
PHOTINE: "O Nazareth, nations look to thee."
THE PRIEST: In Moses' books the deepest meaning slumbers!
PHOTINE: Hear what is written in the Book of Numbers:

The words of Balaam-ben-beor I tell,—
"O Star of Jacob, Rod of Israel!" . . .

THE PRIEST: Whence comes this learning or this memory?

PHOTINE: And hear the words of Deuteronomy . . .

MANY VOICES: A miracle! Magic! 'Tis Christ! Can it be?
No!

PHOTINE: If only it *might* be! Oh, come, come and see!

A VOICE (*from the Crowd*): False prophecy a falser faith inspires.

ANOTHER: And we have seen so many "true Messiahs."

PHOTINE: If it *might* be!

A MERCHANT: But no.

PHOTINE: If it but *might!*

A YOUNG MAN: 'Twill do no harm to go.

THE PRIEST: If she were right,
How could the soul of Christ, give heed, O friends,
Speak to this harlot's soul?

PHOTINE: He condescends.

THE PRIEST: Go, pour your perfumes on your secret stairs,
Go, paint your face and set your evening snares.

PHOTINE: You hurt,—but vex me not. Your taunt is just.
Rightly my sins have robbed me of your trust.

AZRIEL: My proud Photine so humble! There must be
In this strange story some divinity.

PHOTINE (*kneeling in the market place*):
I do confess that I was all unclean.
I ask forgiveness of you all.

A WOMAN (*raising her up*): Photine!

PHOTINE: A messenger unworthy of her gift.
But He delighteth humble souls to lift,
Loves the unlovely, quenches bitterest thirst,
—This gracious Lord,—and blesses the accurst,
Pities the helpless, looks upon the least,
Loves the poor man, the child, the bird, the beast—
The small, sad donkey,—wistful dogs we beat,
And publicans . . . and women of the street.

DIVERSE CRIES: Make her hush! Shameless sinner! Before she begins
Further blasphemous speech!
PHOTINE: I am cleansed from my sins.
A WOMAN (*starting from the crowd and running to her*):
Will He cleanse me of mine,—of all mine?
PHOTINE: Yes, indeed!
He will not break, not He, the bruised reed.
The dimmest smoking flax He will not quench.
With living waters the hurt reed He'll drench,
Till on that reed in the sweet breeze of spring,
His happy birds may safely sway and sing.
And He the smoking flaxen wick will trim
Till it will glow and flame, and shine for Him.
THE PRIEST: Ah, to man's soul are these pernicious lies
Like vinegar to teeth, like smoke to eyes.
A YOUNG MAN: How beautiful she is!
ANOTHER: I see my duty.
The Spirit calls through her!
ANOTHER: You see her beauty.
ANOTHER (*trying to draw* PHOTINE *away, indicating a little group who seem interested and even convinced*):
Come! These will go with you!
PHOTINE: Ah, no!
Not without half the city!
A CHILD: I will go!
PHOTINE (*moving through the crowd*):
O ye, whose dwelling not a Jewish child
May enter in except he be defiled,
Ye, who are counted in the shameful ranks
Of tricksters, jugglers, thieves and mountebanks,
Excluded by the Law from holy feasts,
Vile gluttons, drunkards, pagans, unclean beasts,—
Samaritans,—for that dishonored name
Holds all of misery and all of shame!—

Rabble of this world, outcasts of the other,
Come to this Christ who calls Himself your Brother!
But they who know not sins nor pains nor cares,—
The strong, the proud,—this Christ is none of theirs.

THE PRIEST: Christ is a King to make the boldest shrink!

PHOTINE: A wayworn man who asked me for a drink.

THE PRIEST: Endiamonded with star and winged with light
From Heaven's blue dome He takes His awful flight.

PHOTINE: He choose the little footpath that we tread.
His stars are in His soul, not on His head.

THE PRIEST: He cries "To disobey the Law is death."

PHOTINE: He says,—so quietly,—"All life is faith."

THE PRIEST: A Warrior whose sword smites near and far!

PHOTINE: He is the peaceful Enemy of war,—
Ruin of ruin and the Death of death!

THE PRIEST: Whence comes this prophet? Every scripture saith
Christ is the Son of David's royal line.

PHOTINE: Then surely Jesus has this seal and sign.
He did not tell me; that is for the schools.
I know His hands have handled workman's tools.
The angels, in a little shop somewhere.
Have kissed the shaving tangled in His hair!
Docile, He fashioned balances and yokes.
The Son of God, He toiled like simple folks,
And making yokes, He thought of all we bear,
And dreamed of justice, making balance fair.

A MAN: Let's go to Him!

THE PRIEST: 'Tis a false Christ!

THE MAN: I'd rue
If, fearing false Christs, I should miss the true!

A WOMAN: Oh, lead us to Him! Leave these blind and dumb!

PHOTINE: I will not move till all the city come!

A MAN (*laughing derisively*):
A Christ that pardons sinners! Watch me start!

PHOTINE: His words bring silence to a clamorous heart!

ANOTHER (*scornfully*): A gossiper with women at a well!

PHOTINE: White shadows on my soul from His soul fell.
A MERCHANT: He's beautiful when talking?
PHOTINE: Oh, He shines!
Never man spoke like this Man. Hear the signs
That make His Kingdom; there the first are last,
The sad learn laughter, pain is overpast.
Blessed are they that mourn, the weary, blest;
Those shall be comforted and these shall rest.
A MERCHANT: The crowd believes. Her triumph seems complete.
PHOTINE: I'll cry what He has said from street to street.
(*She goes out, followed by the crowd.*)
FIRST OLD MAN: She is gone!
A MERCHANT (*watching*): The city will go mad before she stops!
ANOTHER MERCHANT (*calling to the wings*):
Why don't you fools come back and mind your shops?
ANOTHER: What can one do? One needs must hear her speak.
PHOTINE'S VOICE (*without*):
He says, "Ye shall be very strong, ye weak!"
FIRST MERCHANT: That is most subversive. That must never be.
PHOTINE'S VOICE (*farther away*):
"And ye shall judge your judges."
AN ELDER (*horrified*): Anarchy!
ANOTHER: What's to be done?
THE PRIEST: Call out the Romans.
(*To a Merchant*) Quick.
(*He explains in a whisper what is to be said. One catches the word.*)
Disturbs the public peace . . . a mob . . . a trick.
PHOTINE'S VOICE (*without*):
"Verily, verily," this Saviour said,
"My gifts are for the disinherited."
A MERCHANT (*terror-stricken*):
Hark to the words that echo through the town!

THE PRIEST (*to his messenger*):
Call out the soldiers! Strike this woman down!
This leads to civil war!
PHOTINE'S VOICE (*without, nearer*): He says, though hard,
The narrow way is best.
THE PRIEST (*to the merchant*): Call out the guard!
(*The messenger goes off, running.*)
PHOTINE (*re-enters, followed by a larger crowd*):
He says, again, mere learning is a wraith,
"Blest are the poor in spirit," and He saith
His Kingdom is . . .
A MAN (*who follows her, trembling, ecstatic*):
Hear ye, and follow her!
These are not mortal words. Too deep they stir.
Only a God could paint these words of dawn.
What said He more, Photine? Photine, say on!
PHOTINE: He said, "Be gentle, meek, admit, confess.
Be of good cheer. Love peace and cheerfulness.
Do unto others as ye would that they
Should do to you. All Law ye thus obey.
Blessed are ye when all men shall revile" . . .
What can I tell? New words. And all the while
One word comes back the other words to prove,
Love, love, love always. Heaven is only love.
"My Father loves the loving." And He said,
"Give all things for love." "Give the half of your bread
To the tiresomest neighbor's untimeliest demand."
"If ye come to my altar, a gift in your hand,
And remember a wrong you have failed to appease,
Leave your gift and come not before God on your knees
Till your brother forgives you, and then, reconciled,
You may come before God like His confident child."
"Loving brothers is easy. That much heathen do!
'Tis a light thing to love who has first loved you.
But love your oppressors, the cruel, the strong,
And seventy times seven forgive every wrong."

"I love them that hate Me;"—that sin against love.
"If any hurt you, let your patience reprove.
If one snatches thy coat, give him also thy cloak.
Love ingrates. Let injuries vanish in smoke.
Love your enemies, so shall ye be of My friends.
Love freely. The love ye receive never ends.
Love more! And love always! Whatever befall.
Ah, love one another as I have loved all!
Love much. When one loves, life is little to pay.
What that love truly means, I will show you some day.
Love greatly, Love only can conquer the world.
Love forever!"

ALL (*falling on their knees*):
O, where is His banner unfurled?
Take us to Him.

Tumultuous Cries: The Christ! Son of David. Our King!

(*At this moment, all, enthusiastically form a column behind* PHOTINE, *and start to go out through the city gate. They are roughly forced back by the Roman soldiers, who pour in at the gate. The centurion appears.*)

SCENE IV

The Same. THE CENTURION, *the Soldiers*

THE CENTURION: Open sedition! We have heard this thing.
Disperse! What king is he whom you acclaim?
Who is that woman? Let us know her name.
Seize her at once!

PHOTINE (*as the soldiers bind her hands*):
All's lost! Oh, all is lost!
I cannot lead them! . . .

THE CENTURION (*angrily to the crowd*):
Shall my will be crossed?
No groups! . . . no whispering! Be well afraid!
(*To the* MERCHANTS.)
Ye simple merchants, ply your little trade!

(*To* PHOTINE.)
Leader of mobs,—you'd teach them to withstand
Cæsar, his laws, his taxes on the land.
What did you speak of?

PHOTINE: Only . . .

THE CENTURION (*to the soldier who is tighting the cords about* PHOTINE'S *wrists*): Make it press!

PHOTINE: Only of mercy and of gentleness,
Of pity and of love.

THE CENTURION: What else?

A MAN (*earnestly*): That's all.

ANOTHER (*earnestly*): No more.

THE PRIEST: She spoke of the Messiah.

THE CROWD (*with indignation*): Oh!

THE CENTURION (*to* PHOTINE, *ironically*): Ah, you'd restore
The kingdom, then? Rome, be assured, is grateful.
(*To the soldiers, laughing.*)
She speaks of their Messiah, that vision fateful
Whom Hebrews seek as their Deliverer
To free them from Rome's rule. Lay hold of her!
Pilate shall hear of her Messiah's glory.
Forward!

PHOTINE (*aside*): All's lost.

THE PRIEST (*to the* CENTURION): She tells a stirring story
To move the mob,—that Christ is near to us,
And the poor fool has dared to honor thus
An unknown fellow, who no doubt conspires,
A man of Nazareth.

THE CENTURION: Now by my household fires,
A man of Nazareth? Why, I know the Man.
(*To the soldiers.*)
We heard of him before this stir began,—
The fellow with a cure for leprosy,
A carpenter, the Man of Galilee.

THE PRIEST: From such disturbers Cæsar swiftly frees us.

THE CENTURION: Joshua the fellow's called,—or is it Jesus?

THE PRIEST: 'Tis he.

THE CENTURION: What, Jesus? Why, I little thought
That I was going. . . . After all, 'tis naught. . . .
He will not work us harm, so much I know.
(*To the soldiers.*)
'Twas only Jesus! Let the woman go!

PHOTINE (*delivered from her bonds*): Heaven!

THE CENTURION: A Jew, just touched with melancholy.
I myself saw Him do an act of folly.
'Twas at Jerusalem a month ago.
Of Fort Antonia's guard, I watched below
The temple, and the folk, and all they did,
I marked a figure that could not be hid,
So very white his robe; His gestures free
Spoke of some Essene out of En-Gaddi,
Preacher or prophet,—I cared not to probe.
Twelve black robes followed close the linen robe.
And so this group, still talking, shortly trod
Close to the place where Jews, to serve their God,
Make change, installed at many a little table,
On weights, which, rumor says, are never stable.
In this amazing temple, merchants vend
Salt, oil, sheep, cattle, wares without an end.
The beasts were tied with bits of cord and strings.
All suddenly this Man a strong arm flings
Free of his mantle takes those broken strands,
Twists them together, and with mighty hands
Drives all before him like a herd,—in short,
Left not a gouty merchant in the court.
He overthrew their stalls,—quite furious
Yet quite serene; the thing was very curious.
The people cheered. We Romans laughed aloud.
That Man will never lead a lawless crowd.
The temple's cleanser will not harm the throne.
He says: "Give Cæsar what is Cæsar's own."

THE PRIEST: You have not heard the woman.

THE CENTURION (*laughing and remounting*): I prefer
To lose that pleasure.
THE PRIEST (*trying to detain him*): Listen!
THE CENTURION: My good sir,
I've better things to do.
THE PRIEST: What things?
THE CENTURION: To lie beneath a tree,
—For choice, a fig-tree,—and to take with me
Horace, best underscored, as I have planned,
By the blue finger of a leafy hand.
THE PRIEST: But . . .
THE CENTURION (*drily*): Breaking my leisure may be fraught
with danger.
(*To the people.*)
Keep your Messiah, this Galilean stranger.
(*To the soldiers, as he goes out.*)
I think this quiet blond young carpenter
Is not the man to set the world astir.

SCENE V

The Same, without THE CENTURION *and the Soldiers*

PHOTINE: Now, let us hasten.
(*Murmurs.*)
A MAN: I'll do no such thing.
PHOTINE: Why?
ANOTHER: He fawns on Cæsar. He is not my king.
ANOTHER: The true Messiah will win the throne for us.
ANOTHER: He pays the tax?
ANOTHER: Accepts Tiberius?
PHOTINE: Lord, Lord they want what is so little worth!
—The Kingdom that He brings is not of earth.
You think of who shall govern in the land.
Oh, try to listen, try to understand!
This Kingdom is eternal. We shall be
Hidden and safe and glorious and free.

Samaritans, we know what ages since
Began our buffetings from prince to prince!
We are the quarry, hunted through the rocks
Whether by Roman wolf or Jewish fox.
What does it matter? Give with just disdain,
His own to Cæsar. And our *own* retain.

ALL: But yes . . .

A MAN: The Kingdom?

PHOTINE: It is not of earth,
Since not a king, but God, has given it birth.

ANOTHER: How will we know the kingdom,—this new leaven?

PHOTINE: First in yourselves, and afterwards, in heaven.

SEVERAL VOICES: Ourselves?

PHOTINE (*going from one to another*):

The tree will grow, if but the seed be in.
Wish only, and the Kingdom will begin.
For all! For all! Be loving. And be true.
And you will find the Kingdom. You!—and you!
Stonecutter, you will work, in happy wise,
For through the shade that guards, and blinds, your eyes,
Will filter in some rays of this new Light!
Carver of jewels and of silver bright,
Your fingers will be fanned, to cool their aching,
By wings of silver cherubs you are making!
Woodworker, sawing countless panels thin,
Acacia, cedar, fir—to set them in
The rich man's alcoves,—you will bless the toil
That makes the forest's balms your daily spoil!
Weavers, you'll pity those for whom ye weave!
Lacemakers, you no longer will believe
That they are happier who wear your laces!
Gladness will find you in the darkest places.
Potter, the finest glaze is made of love!
Shepherds, ye'll gladly seek the sheep that rove!
Each will be happy at his useful trade.
You'll whistle, basket makers, as ye braid!

THE PRIEST: 'Tis but a hope, this kingdom in the cloud!
PHOTINE: Have you a better hope, to feed this crowd?
CRIES FROM ALL: Yes! Follow her! She'll take us to the King.
A dulcimer! A lute! Come, let us sing!
A MERCHANT: I go, but not believing, just to see!
PHOTINE: Come, just the same!
AZRIEL: I go but hopelessly,
Only to act.
PHOTINE: Come, just the same!
A YOUNG MAN (*boldly*): Well, blame
Your beauty if I go.
PHOTINE: Come, just the same!
Come, gathering branches from the olive tree,
No matter why ye come! But come and see!
THE PRIEST: Ah, well, I'll go. For it may be at least
Her Christ will found a cult and make me priest.
PHOTINE: Oh, come! March on and sing His psalms!
"Oh, come with trumpet and with shawms."
ALL THE CROWD (*taking up the Psalm with a mighty cry of enthusiasm*):
Oh, come with shawms all blazoned o'er
With pearl, with coral, and with gold.
Oh, come with trumpets manifold
And sing His praise Whom we adore.
(*The Crowd, led by* PHOTINE, *is engulfed in the great gateway, and the Psalm re-echoes from the open country.*)
Be joyful, earth, before your King,
Ye seas, O clap your hands and sing.
Ye floods . . . ye hills . . .

(*Curtain*)

THIRD PART

Salvator Mundi

Again Jacob's Well. Jesus *is sitting on the well-curb. The sun is low in the west. The sky is gold and pink. The Disciples are grouped at a little distance from the Master. They are finishing the poor meal they secured by their random purchases. Seated, or lying on their stomachs, they make a circle around a little fire, which smolders and then sends up, very straight in the still air, a thin thread of blue.*

They whisper and look furtively, from time to time, at Jesus. *They are troubled.* Jesus *is in a dream.*

SCENE I

Jesus *and His disciples*

Peter (*in a low voice, indignantly*): He spoke to her!
Andrew (*same manner*): That woman!
James (*same manner*): Spoke to *her!*
Peter: I dare not blame Him, but one must demur . . .
Strangely imprudent,—that we must declare.
Andrew: Why does he fast? This is not greedy fare.
Peter: 'Tis to astonish us, I'll stake my word!
Jesus: Not for that reason, Simon.
John: Oh, He heard!
Peter: I spoke too loud.
Nathanael: Then, Master, why?

PETER (*in a low tone*): I think
It is to prove He needs not meat nor drink!
JESUS: Nay, I have meat that yet ye know not of.
PETER (*lowering his voice*):
Who could have brought it? From the hill above?
JOHN: Perhaps the angels bring Him nourishment!
JESUS: To do the work whereunto I was sent,—
This is my secret food that never fails.
PETER (*still lower, captiously*):
That will that took us by these hills and vales,
Valley of Sichar!
JOHN: But it had to be . . .
PETER: Better a longer walk to Galilee
By way of Sharon.
NATHANAEL: Or of Jordan's plain.
ANDREW: Just taste this bread! Rock! I'll not come again
(*He throws the loaf away.*)
Into Samaria! Curse it mile by mile!
PETER: Do you believe that it can be worth while
Thus to seek out the mean, the vile, the low?
JESUS: It is the scattered sheep to whom I go.
JOHN: Speak lower.
JAMES: That's His plan. 'Twill be a snare
That gets us killed.
JOHN: The Master bears His share.
PETER: But what good is it? And whom seek we here?
What does He at this well, where none draws near
To listen but this woman with her cruise?
Ye know I doubt Him not, but He might choose,
To win the people,—if that be His end,—
Some fitter ally and some worthier friend!
JAMES: Clean hands alone are fit to sow good seed.
PETER: A harlot!
JAMES: Moses' law has taught indeed
Such women should be stoned, so black their sin.
PETER: If I would win a city . . .

JAMES: You'd begin? . . .
PETER: I'd choose the prosperous, the proud, the stable,—
Priest at his altar, changer at his table.
One, who has influence, can lead the rest.
I'd try to win one soul, but that the best.
That is the way I'd take to win a city.
ANDREW (*shaking his head*):
To waste such time as His seems such a pity.
PETER: Sometimes the Master seems to mock, almost,—
The meanest city of the meanest coast
Of the last people, and among these last
To choose a woman,—and that one outcast.
JESUS: O children, water is for those who thirst.
For Me, the first are last, the last are first!
PETER (*aside*): I'll speak no more. Our lowest word is caught.
(*He gets up and stands looking at a field of young wheat.*)
(*Silence.*)
JESUS: No.
JAMES: To what didst Thou say no?
JESUS: To Peter's thought.
PETER (*turning, astonished*): Master!
JOHN (*crying out suddenly*): I die of thirst!
ANDREW: 'Tis all their fault,
The cruel pagans filled the rice with salt!
NATHANAEL: How can we drink?
ANDREW: We have no cruise.
JOHN: That one.
You know . . . has left . . .
JAMES: What?
JOHN: Her cruise.
PETER: It can't be done;
'Tis infamy to touch, by all our school.
Oh, keep your hands away!
JOHN (*his two hands on the water-pot*): It feels so cool.
I am so thirsty.

PETER: It is not for us,—
Poison, uncleanness! . . .
JOHN: Is it poisonous?
PETER: Doubly,—for in this cruise, as well we know,
Are vice and infamy.
JOHN: So much the worse. I . . .
(*He drinks.*) Oh!
NATHANAEL: What is it?
JOHN (*handing him the pitcher*): Taste!
NATHANAEL (*having tasted*): Oh!
ANDREW: What is it?
NATHANAEL (*handing it to him*): Taste!
ANDREW (*same play*): Oh!
JAMES: What? What is it?
ANDREW: Taste!
JAMES: What pearl from heaven is in this pitcher placed?
NATHANAEL: 'Tis honey!
ANDREW: Flowers distilled!
JOHN: One weeps in tasting!
PETER: What left she here, forth on her errand hasting?
JESUS: She has left within this cruise
Lightness of an idle heart;
Cruel pride that bade her choose
Snares and every subtle art.
She has left her heavy sins,
Evil dreams and wishes wrong,
Mirth that ends ere it begins,
Empty laughter, soulless song.
Sighs for every worthless cause,
All the darkness of her soul.
PETER: Master, by what wondrous laws
Can such parts compose this whole?
JESUS: The sweetness ye find in a draught from this cruise
Comes not from lilies the distillers bruise,
Nor honey-comb all golden-sweet.
The sweetness ye find I alone can distill,

From weakness, from sin, from all harm, from all ill,
Left, clean forsaken, at My feet.

PETER (*drinking*): Divine refreshment from this earthen brink,—
My lips can listen and my ears can drink!
(*He puts down the pitcher.*)
Master, when Thou saidst No, and seemed so plain
To read my thought, 'twas of? . . .

JESUS: The ripened grain.
You thought about my story, and this field
And the long months before the fruitful yield.

PETER: Yes, four long months before the bending skies
Will see the harvest.

JESUS: No.

PETER: What?

JESUS: Lift thine eyes!

PETER: Why, Master?

JESUS: Lift thine eyes! The field is white!
Put in your sickle! Harvest it aright!
Now, 'twixt the wheat and tares make ye your choice.
One sows, another reaps, and all rejoice!
Blessed injustice! Nearer brother grows
To brother, he who reaps and he who sows.
The Harvester has sent you to the fields.
Lift up your eyes and see the grain it yields.

PETER: Truly, one sees, where the last pink cloud roves,
The fields look white to harvest.

JOHN: Look! It moves!

THE CROWD (*in the distance*): *O come with trumpets!*

NATHANAEL: And it sings!

PETER: What is this harvest that so rings
With gladness?
(*They have all climbed the little hill and look across the fields.*)

ANDREW: All the city comes!

JOHN: And see

How, like white foam upon a darker sea,
Through the black gate . . .

PETER: As if a mighty Hand,
Pressing the walls, forbids them to withstand.

THE CROWD: *O come with dulcimers . . .*

PETER: Ah, say,
What form so grandly lead the way?

JESUS (*sitting motionless at the well*):
They seek the well, who know the bitterest thirst;
So shall the first be last, the last be first.

THE CROWD (*drawing nearer*): *To honor Him Who comes . . .*

JOHN: O hark!

PETER (*to* JESUS): Forgive me, Lord, who was so slow to mark . . .

THE CROWD: *Earth, thy salvation draweth nigh.*

JOHN: Lord, come and see!

NATHANAEL: The meadows cry!

PETER: Where have they found such myriad roses?

JAMES: Come, Lord!

JESUS: I see.

PETER: To see, His eyes He closes.

JESUS: I saw them in my heart so long ago!

THE CROWD: *Floods, clap your hands. Ye seas, your trumpets blow.*

ANDREW: They are nearly here.

PHOTINE'S VOICE (*singing, very near*): *Ye oceans, move.*
Rejoice together, all ye lands,
Hills, shout aloud to Him we love,
Ye water floods, clap, clap your hands.

PETER: This voice that sings?

JESUS: Photine's. For Me.

PHOTINE (*appearing at the top of the hill, breathless, dishevelled, her arms full of flowers gathered as she ran, her eyes splendid*): Master, the city comes to Thee.

(*She is preceded by a throng of excited children, who tum-*

ble recklessly down the footpath, sliding down the hill, waving olive branches. She is followed by a throng that fills the stage, a throng that rushes to throw itself upon JESUS. JESUS *rises. The crowd checks itself. There is silence.*)

SCENE II

The Same. All the Samaritans

JESUS: Photine! . . .

PHOTINE (*in an ecstacy*): They come, a throng entranced.
I know not what I said, not how it chanced.
—I lost my bracelet, running through the field,—
Is it not true the lepers shall be healed?
—I told them all, He heals whate'er He touches.
Lord, see the lame, with garlands on their crutches!
See the young maids! Their singing was so sweet!
The soldiers checked us on the city street,
But we came running.—Take this wild rose, Lord. . . .
You palsied man, draw near and be restored.
The children danced and sang. *They* understood.
Why, look! My hands are scratched and stained with blood,
I broke so many branches on the way.
All Sichem is deserted for a day.
This baby was the first who wished to start.
This young man came, though doubting in his heart,
And just in coming, he has lost his doubt.
The very starting put them all to rout!
The merchants only thought I injured trade;
The priest condemned. But I was not afraid.
I spoke Thy Word, scarce knowing whence it was.
—Oh, let me breathe the perfume of this grass,—
Some power from God in my poor voice was vested.
In vain the merchants threatened and protested.
I think the women gladly heard my story.
I laugh for joy! Whence comes this inner glory?
Lord, let them kiss Thy robe! Thy people came

To worship! I will call them all by name.
Thou Who knowest all, Thou knowest all have come,
And thou wouldst know their names, though I were dumb.
This one is Thamar. Peninah is here.
New people come. O look! Both far and near,
The field is white with multitudes that press.
I choke with sobs,—but all for happiness.

JESUS: You won the town for Me.

PHOTINE: Nay, it was thine own.
I only told them where to find Thy throne.
Daughter of folly, made a prophetess,
I bore Thy word to these Thou camest to bless.
But it was Thou, O Silent One divine,
Who looked upon the town and made it Thine.
O white-robed Warrior, the soul's true Liege,
Thou girdest Sichem with an unseen siege.
O Conqueror divine, O Foeman tender,
I won it not! Thine own to Thee we render!
I have no strength, no might, nor any share,
Except my joy, that I am chosen to bear
The keys of this Thy city. My sole part,
Keys of these hearts to give Thee, on my heart!

A MAN: The crowd stands motionless, by some strange law.
'Tis like a lion whose enormous paw
Scarce dares to hold the snowy lamb it felled.

ANOTHER: This shouting, crazy crowd in silence held
Dares hardly breathe.

A WOMAN: It is fitting to be dumb
Before a King.

PHOTINE: I hear a scarab hum.

A WOMAN: Give us this living water, Lord, we pray!

PHOTINE: See, in their hands the olive branches sway
Though not a breath is stirring in the trees.

AZRIEL: Who is this man who sways me like a breeze,—
This Harvester whose fan is in His hand?
My soul seems waking at some loud command.

A MAN: We are vile folk, deserving every fling
The Jews can cast!
JESUS: Ye need my shepherding.
ANOTHER: Black sheep, O Shepherd, thin, and used to keep
To rocky ridges!
JESUS: Still ye are My sheep.
I know my sheep in whatsoever fold.
The shepherd loves the lamb, strayed, bleating, cold.
Though all but one be folded, I no less
Will seek that lost one in the wilderness,
Will call until it hears and knows My voice,
Then lay it on my shoulders and rejoice.
Oh, I will seek untiring, day and night,
Till all My flock, the black sheep and the white,
By My light crook all tenderly controlled,
Obey one Shepherd, happy in one fold.
A YOUNG MAN: I feel baptismal waters on my brow.
A WOMAN: Oh, touch my tears!
ANOTHER WOMAN: Oh, bless my child!
AN OLD MAN: Lord, now
Thy servant could depart in peace to Thee!
A YOUNG GIRL: I never hoped that He would look at me!
A MAN: How graciously His lovely head is bowed!
A WOMAN (*coming forward out of the throng*):
O Lord, I sought to hide me in the crowd,
I feared Thine eyes that see the stain within!
JESUS: I raised thy sister taken in her sin.
A MERCHANT: Canst Thou forgive me, Scourger of my kind,
That to true riches I have been so blind.
—Loving all gold but that laid up above?
JESUS: 'Twas only from the temple that I drove
The merchants.
THE DRUNKARD: Couldst Thou even pardon me,
Giver of water, living, lasting, free,
That I have mingled stronger drink with mine?
JESUS (*smiling*): In Galilee, I made the water wine.

THE PRIEST: For such a Christ, no blow I'll ever strike,
Forgiving drunkards, harlots and the like.
JESUS (*with anger*): I tell thee, hypocrite . . .
(*At this moment, the children begin to dance and sing.*)
PETER (*severely, to a woman*): Take them away.
JESUS (*turning quickly*):
Forbid them not. You know not what you say.
I love their happy songs, their motions free.
Suffer the little ones to come to Me.
Bring here, Photine, those two who, all dismayed,
Hide in thy gown.
PHOTINE: Come, loves, be not afraid!
THE PRIEST: You answer not.
JESUS: The answer is prepared.
PHOTINE: Ye see this Lord Whom David lord declared,—
The children play He bids us not forbid;
He calls no bears, as once Elisha did.
One nestles in His arms, all comforted.
His hand is on the other's curly head.
JESUS: O beautiful new eyes. Have ye such eyes!
So shall ye enter into paradise!
(*To the children*)
Will you repeat—let no one say them nay,—
The words you sang as you began to play?
A CHILD: *We piped a dance;*
You wouldn't play;
ANOTHER CHILD: *We bade you cry;*
You said us nay.
JESUS: Simon, your frowns your tender heart belie.
The little song has furnished my reply.
Does it not fit the people of this time
Whose thoughts with other's never seem to chime?
First, John the Baptist with his message stern,
Dark, lonely, roughly clad and taciturn,
Burning with zeal, denouncing, scourging evil
Ye said of him "the fellow hath a devil."

Eating and drinking came the Son of Man,
And ye who hated John this time began,
"A glutton, who is everybody's friend."
The child's song answers all who thus contend.
Watch but that baby singing as she skips,
And hark to wisdom from an infant's lips.

A MERCHANT: He Who so loves, yet so superbly hurled
That challenge, is the Saviour of the World.

A MAN: Saviour and Master!

PHOTINE: And a King to give
Courage to die!

AZRIEL: He gives me cause to live!

A YOUNG MAN: His finger graves gold letters on my heart!

ANOTHER: From His heart to my own, there seems to start
A rainbow bridge, an endless, perfect arch!—

A MAN (*guided by* PHOTINE *to* JESUS): I am blind.

JESUS: Receive thy sight!

A MAN (*carried by attendants*): I am lame.

JESUS: Arise and march!

THE CROWD: A miracle!

JESUS (*to another*): Ask what thou wilt? Speak!

A MAN: I . . . was . . . dumb.

A MAN (*advancing*): I had a heart deadened and hard and numb.
I longed to weep, a moment gone,—but now
I cannot weep. . . . 'Tis difficult.

JESUS: Weep, thou.

PETER: How blest we are, who sees the works you do,—
Such marvels, Master!

JESUS: Ye shall do them, too.

ANDREW: Who? We?

JESUS: Yes, some day I must speed you on your way
To do my works.

PETER: Ourselves? O glorious day!

JESUS: Set not your heart on any earthly prize,
But that your names are written in the skies.

PHOTINE: It will be midnight when Thou goest away.
Bring not that darkness yet. Ah, Master, stay.

Stay, O Lord; a little rest;
Lighten us with this new light.
What! God's Son has been our guest,
Going hence when dawn is bright?

AN OLD MAN: Come to my house a while and stay
To rest Thee from Thy kind fatigues.
Surely Thou must not go away
Till Thou hast tasted of my figs!

A COURTESAN: Stay, Lord, and speak! Here are the flowers
Thy look has shaken from my head.
Chains decked these painted cheeks of ours.
Here, Lord, are streaming tears instead.

A WOMAN: Returning from Thy tasks divine,
When all the sick are visited,
Thou'lt drink of my pomegranate wine
And learn what perfume it can shed.

PHOTINE: Reverently, O Lord, we will
Every wish of Thine obey.
All the city will be still
At the hour when Thou wouldst pray.

A WOMAN: At evening, Lord, when every tone
Is sweet, mysterious and clear,
At each low threshold seek Thine own
And we will heed Thee, drawing near.

A LITTLE GIRL: If Thy white cloak fall to the ground,
—Our evening breeze might chill Thee, Lord.—
We girls would wrap it softly round,
But never interrupt a word.

PHOTINE: Speaking to our souls' distresses,
Thou shall feel, among us there,
'Neath Thy hand, a baby's tresses,
At Thy feet a woman's hair.

(*Each one, speaking, has come to kneel before* JESUS, *letting fall the bunch of olive or the garland of roses. At* PHOTINE'S *last word, they kneel and unbind their hair.*)

JESUS: Two days with you I'll rest, I can do no more.
Be all men's guest and knock at every door.

A WOMAN: . . . And then, set forth, more straying lambs to seek!

PHOTINE: And when, departing, Thou wilt climb a peak
Of Ephraim's mountains, cutting our blue skies,
About whose feet Jezreel's flowered mantle lies,
Thine eyes will find a little, hidden place,
Like a small flock, safe huddled in one space,
—The synagogue its fold, one not too clean—
First home of Him they call the Nazarene.

JESUS: O cruel Nazareth, whose smallest street
Has known the pressure of my infant feet,
Thou wilt not hear the words of such an one,—
"The carpenter;—the carpenter's young son,"
Always 'tis true,—mine own receive me not;
I seek my brothers and behold my lot,
—O wondrous earnest of my Father's plans!—
My brothers, sisters, are Samaritans!
In his own land no prophet is esteemed.
—To do my Father's will is all I dreamed.

CRIES: Hosannah! Praise to Christ! Take up the song!

JESUS: Seeking these . . . heathen . . . Simon, was I wrong?

PHOTINE (*pointing to the twilight sky*): The evening falls. This dear day seeks to die.
It cannot die. When Jacob's well is dry,
When yonder olive tree is dust again
With yonder fig;—renewing all the plain

And every hill, forth from this valley green,
The living flood shall bathe the world.

JESUS: Photine,
Thy image, too, the world will never lose,
Treading the footpath with thy lifted cruise.
When future ages see the Son of Man,
With Magdalene or Samaritan,
Magdala, Sichem, these two will compete
To bring its woman closest to My feet;
So close allied, that this shall be your glory,
Blonde hair and brown shall mingle in the story.

THE PRIEST: So be it! Thou art Christ! We trust Thy word.
Then surely thou'lt rebuild the temple, Lord?

JESUS: No!

THE PRIEST: Rabbi, Thou wilt choose Thy priest?

JESUS: Not yet.

THE PRIEST: Surely a high priest?

JESUS: No.

THE PRIEST: Ah, I forget,
Thou'lt keep that title?

JESUS: No.

THE PRIEST: Change Thy robe of white
For purple, scarlet, gold and all delight?

JESUS: No.

THE PRIEST: In Ophir's mines already slaves must delve
For Thy twelve jewels?
(*He points to his breast.*)

JESUS: Nay, I *have* my Twelve.

A YOUNG MAN: What temple shall we choose Him? 'Tis his due!

PHOTINE: The flowery slope, the mountain's changing blue!

ANOTHER: What throne for Him of Whom the prophets wrote?

PHOTINE: The well's rough rim; a little, rocking boat.

THE PRIEST: What, then, is worship?

JESUS: 'Tis to do God's will!

PRIEST: But one must pray.

JESUS: A little, . . . low and still.
Be not like those who, standing on the street,
Say the long prayers they endlessly repeat,
Prayer's not a grindstone; 'tis the song of birds!
My Father hears the spirit, not the words.
They who repeat the rhythms of the schools
Are like to riders drowsing on their mules.
Short, trusting prayer a better faith had provéd.
Not like a beggar, but a child belovéd.
The best prayer is in secret, day by day.
Pray ye as I have taught Photine to pray.
(*As He speaks, He lays His hand very gently upon* PHOTINE'S *shoulder, making her kneel.*)
Pray wheresoe'er ye are,—in Galilee,
Samaria, or lands beyond the sea;
Not beating on your breast, with garments torn,—
Lifting a cheerful face, not one forlorn.
JEHOVAH listens not alone to them
Who on Gerizim, at Jerusalem,
Call upon Him Who dwelleth everywhere.
PHOTINE: With closed eyes, softly, then begin your prayer,
Wherever and whenever is your need,
Feeling yourself God's child in very deed.
"Father in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, the same
On this Thy earth as that, Thy heaven. Give
The daily bread whereby Thy children live.
Forgive our many trespasses, as we
Forgive each other. From temptations free
Thy children, kept from evil. Take Thou then
Thy kingdom, power and glory."
THE CROWD: Yea, amen.

(*Curtain*)

CYRANO OF BERGERAC

Heroic Comedy in Five Acts

In Verse

It is to the soul of Cyrano that I wished to dedicate this poem. But since it has entered into you, Coquelin, it is to you that I dedicate it.

E. R.

CYRANO OF BERGERAC

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Cyrano of Bergerac.
Christian of Neuvillette.
Count of Guiche.
Ragueneau.
Le Bret.
Captain Carbon of Castel-Jaloux.
The Cadets.
Lignière.
Valvert.
A Marquis.
Second Marquis.
Third Marquis.
Montfleury.
Bellerose.
Jodelet.
Cuigy.
Brissaille.
A Churl.
A Musketeer.
Another Musketeer.
A Spanish Officer.
A Lighthorseman.
The Porter.
A Citizen.
His Son.
A Cut-Purse.

A Spectator.
A Guard.
Bertrandou the Fifer.
A Capuchin.
Two Musicians.
The Poets.
The Pastry Cooks.
Roxane.
Sister Martha.
Lise.
The Vender of Light Wines.
Mother Margaret of Jesus.
The Duenna.
Sister Claire.
An Actress.
Second Actress.
The Pages.
The Waitress.
The Crowd, Plain Citizens, Marquises, Musketeers, Pick-pockets, Pastry Cooks, Poets, Cadets of Gascony, the Cardinal, the Academicians, Comedians, Violins, Pages, Children, Spanish Soldiers, Spectators, Euphuists, Nuns, etc.

(First four acts in 1640, the fifth in 1655.)

ACT I

A Play at the Hotel of Burgundy

The hall of the Hotel of Burgundy in 1640. A sort of tennis court arranged and decorated for theatrical productions.

The hall is an oblong; it is seen obliquely, in such a way that one side of it makes the background, which begins at the front wing on the right and runs to the rear wing on the left, making an angle with the stage which is seen cantwise.

The stage is encumbered on both sides with benches placed along the wings. The curtain is made of two lengths of tapestry which can be drawn apart. Above a harlequin's mask, the royal arms. Broad steps lead from the stage to the hall floor. On either side of these steps is a place for the musicians. A row of candles. There are two ranks of side galleries; the upper tier is divided into boxes.

There are no seats in the pit, which is the real stage of this play; but at he back of the pit on the right some benches are ranged and under a stairway which leads to the better seats,—a stairway of which only the lower steps can be seen, there is a sort of refreshment booth, decorated with little tapers, vases of flowers, glasses of crystal, plates of cakes, flagons, etc.

At the back, under the gallery, is the entrance. A great door is partly opened to admit the spectators. On a panel of this door, as well as in various corners and above the refreshment stand, are red placards, on which one may read, CLORISE. As the curtain rises, the hall is in semi-darkness, and quite empty. The lustres are lowered to the middle of the pit, ready to be lighted.

SCENE I

The Public, arriving a few at a time. Cavaliers, Lackeys, Pages, Cut-Purses, the PORTER, *etc. Later the Marquises,* CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, *the Serving Maid, the Musicians, etc.*

(*One hears, behind the door, a tumult of voices; then a trooper enters, abruptly.*)

THE PORTER (*pursuing him*): Hola. Your fifteen pence.
THE TROOPER: I enter gratis.
THE PORTER: Why?
THE TROOPER: I'm of the King's Horse,—of the Household, I.
THE PORTER (*to another who comes in*): You?
SECOND TROOPER: I don't pay.
THE PORTER: But . . .
SECOND TROOPER: I'm a musketeer.
FIRST TROOPER (*to second*): They don't begin till two. The pit is clear.
Let's have a bout at fencing.
A LACKEY (*coming in*): Flanquin, . . . hey!
ANOTHER (*already arrived*): Wine?
FIRST (*disclosing a pack of cards, hidden in his doublet*): Cards, dice.
(*He seats himself on the floor.*) Yes, my bully boy.
SECOND LACKEY (*same play*): Let's play.
FIRST LACKEY (*feels in his pocket for a candle end, which he lights and sets on the floor*):
I like a light, and so I filched this bit.
A GUARD (*to a flower girl who comes in*):
How sweet, to come before the lamps are lit.
ONE OF THE FENCERS: Touch!
ONE OF THE GAMBLERS: Clubs!
THE GUARD (*pursuing the girl*): A kiss!
THE FLOWER GIRL (*freeing herself*): They'll see!
THE GUARD: Oh, never fear.
A MAN (*seating himself on the ground, with others who have brought provisions*): When one comes early, one has comfort here.

SO BE IT! CLIMB!

A Citizen (*directing his son*): Let us sit here.
A Player: Aces!
A Man (*who takes a bottle from under his coat, as he sits down*):
I droughtily
Drink burgundy at the Hotel of Burgundy.
(*He drinks.*)
Citizen (*to his son*): A man might take this for a wicked place.
(*He points to the drunkard with the tip of his walking stick.*)
Sots!
(*One of the fencers jostles him as he lunges.*)
Brawlers!
(*He sprawls into the group of card-players.*) Gamblers!
The Guard (*behind him, still coaxing the flower girl*):
Kiss me!
Citizen (*hastily dragging his son away*): God of grace!
And in a hall like this, where brigands gather,
They played Rotrou, my son.
The Young Man: And Corneille, Father.
A Group of Pages (*holding hands enter singing a roundelay*):
Tra la la la la la la la lere.
The Porter (*severely*): No nonsense, pages.
First Page (*with wounded dignity*): Sir, we have some pride.
(*Whispers, as the porter turns his back.*) Have you a string?
Second Page: Yes, and a hook, beside.
First Page (*giggling*): Let's fish for wigs. I know a likely station.
A Cut-Purse (*grouping around him several evil looking fellows*): Come, pay attention to your education:
Your first attempt to steal from folk like these.
Second Page (*calling cautiously to other pages already in the upper gallery*): Have you a blow gun?
Third Page (*from the gallery*): Aye, and lots of peas.
(*He shoots the pea-shooter in proof.*)
Young Man (*to his father*): What will they play?
Citizen: *Clorise.*
Young Man: Who is it by?

CITIZEN: Balthazar Baro. That's a piece, say I . . .
(*They go up.*)
THE CUT-PURSE (*to his acolytes*):
Cut all knee ruffles close. Don't spoil the lace.
A SPECTATOR (*to his companion, pointing to a high corner seat*):
I saw The Cid first played from just that place.
THE CUT-PURSE (*making swift play with his fingers*):
Watches. . . .
OLD CITIZEN (*coming back with his son*): You'll see great actors.
THE CUT-PURSE (*with little, furtive movements of his hands*):
He who handles
Handkerchiefs deft . . .
OLD CITIZEN: Montfleury, . . .
SOMEBODY (*calling from the gallery*): Light the candles!
OLD CITIZEN: Bellerose, l'Epy, Jodelet, men of that ilk.
A PAGE (*from the pit*): Here is the waitress.
WAITRESS (*appearing behind the refreshment booth*):
Oranges! New milk!
Shrub! Cedar bitters!
(*A noise at the door.*)
A FALSETTO VOICE: Rascals, knaves, give place.
A LACKEY (*astonished*): Marquises . . . in the pit?
ANOTHER LACKEY: A moment's space.
(*Enter a party of fashionable lordlings.*)
A MARQUIS (*seeing the place half empty*):
What's this? Arriving with the linen drapers?
Step on no toes? It gives a man the vapors;
Lud me! (*He confronts other new arrivals.*)
Cuigy; Brissaille!
(*Effusive greetings.*)
CUIGY: True friends,—to face this scandal,—
Arrived with us before they light a candle.
THE MARQUIS: I am in a plaguey humor. Shadows! Glooms!
ANOTHER: Console yourself. The candle lighter comes.
THE HALL (*greeting the candle lighter*): Ah! . . .

(*They crowd around the lustres as he lights them. Some people have taken seats in the galleries.* LIGNIÈRE *enters the pit, arm in arm with* CHRISTIAN OF NEUVILLETTE. LIGNIÈRE, *his dress a little disordered, looks distinguished, but dissipated and self-indulgent.* CHRISTIAN, *dressed elegantly, but a little unfashionably, seems preoccupied; his attention is fixed on the boxes, which he scans carefully.*)

SCENE II

The Same. CHRISTIAN, LIGNIÈRE; *later,* RAGUENEAU *and* LE BRET

CUIGY: Lignière!

BRISSAILLE (*laughing*): Not fuddled yet?

LIGNIÈRE (*aside to* CHRISTIAN): I may, you said? . . .
(CHRISTIAN *nods assent.*) Baron of Neuvillette
(*Bows acknowledgments.*)

THE HALL (*acclaiming the drawing up of the first lighted chandelier*): Ah! . . .

CUIGY (*to* BRISSAILLE, *looking at* CHRISTIAN): A charming head.

FIRST MARQUIS (*who has heard*): Peuh!

LIGNIÈRE (*presenting to* CHRISTIAN): My lords of Cuigy, of Brissaille.

CHRISTIAN (*bowing*): Enchanted!

FIRST MARQUIS (*to* SECOND): Handsome enough,—but fashion somewhat scanted.
Not the last word.

LIGNIÈRE (*to* CUIGY): Touraine, his native place.

CHRISTIAN: I have hardly been in Paris twenty days.
I join the guards to-morrow as . . .

FIRST MARQUIS (*giving his attention to the people who are coming into the boxes*): See there,—
The wife of the Justice . . .

THE WAITRESS: Oranges! Milk!

THE VIOLINS (*tuning*): La lere.

CUIGY (*to* CHRISTIAN, *indicating the rapidly filling room*):
A rout.

CHRISTIAN: A goodly crowd.
FIRST MARQUIS: The world entire.
(*They name the ladies as they enter their boxes, dressed in the height of the fashion. There are greetings, smiles and bows.*)
SECOND MARQUIS: Guemenee . . .
CUIGY: Bois-Dauphin . . .
FIRST MARQUIS: Whom all admire.
BRISSAILLE: Chavigny . . .
SECOND MARQUIS: Toys with all hearts,—the elf.
LIGNIÈRE: Hola,—from Rouen, here's Corneille himself.
THE YOUNG MAN (*to his father*): The Academy is here?
CITIZEN: More than one member;
Boudu, Boissat, and Cureau of the Chamber,
Porchères, Colomby, Bourdon and Arbaud,—
All those immortals almost in a row.
FIRST MARQUIS: Attention! Look! Our Euphuists take their place,—
Barthenoide, Felixerie, Cassandace.
SECOND MARQUIS: Ah, how melodiously the surnames fall!
You know them all, Marquis?
FIRST MARQUIS: Marquis, I know them all!
LIGNIÈRE (*taking* CHRISTIAN *aside*): My boy, I came to render you a favor
The lady lacks. So I will seek the savor
Of my old vice.
CHRISTIAN (*appealing*): Not yet! Ah, stay, to prove,—
You know the town,—for whom I die of love.
FIRST VIOLIN (*rapping on his rack with his bow*): Violins, all.
(*He lifts his bow.*)
WAITRESS: Citrons! Macaroons!
CHRISTIAN: Stay yet!
She may be a fine lady; a coquette,—
I dare not speak. I am not quick,—not bright; ;
I get confused when smart folk talk or write.

I'm just a timid soldier,—that is all.
She sits there always,—yonder empty stall.

LIGNIÈRE (*trying to break away*): I'm going.

CHRISTIAN (*restraining him*): O, prithee, stay.

LIGNIÈRE (*laughing but determined*): O, you be cursed.
Assoucy waits me. Here, one dies of thirst.

THE WAITRESS (*passing with her tray*): Orangeade!

LIGNIÈRE: Fie!

WAITRESS: Milk!

LIGNIÈRE: Pou-ee!

WAITRESS: Rivesalte!

LIGNIÈRE: Halt!
(*To* CHRISTIAN.) I'll stay a little. See you this rivesalte?
(*He sits down near the serving stand. The waitress pours the rivesalte for him.*)

CRIES (*as the audience recognizes a beaming, fat little man who enters*): Ah, Ragueneau!

LIGNIÈRE (*to* CHRISTIAN): The famous bake-shop master, Ragueneau.

RAGUENEAU (*dressed like a pastry cook in his Sunday-best, coming hurriedly up to* LIGNIÈRE):
Sir, have you seen our master Cyrano?

LIGNIÈRE (*presenting* RAGUENEAU *to* CHRISTIAN):
The pastry cook of playwright and of poet.

RAGUENEAU: You flatter, sir.

LIGNIÈRE: Maecenas!—all men know it!

RAGUENEAU: These gentlemen do let me serve their need.

LIGNIÈRE: On credit. He is poet, too.

RAGUENEAU: Indeed
They tell . . .

LIGNIÈRE: Daft over rhymes.

RAGUENEAU: True, for an roundelay . . .

LIGNIÈRE: You'd give a tart.

RAGUENEAU: Oh, a plain tartlet, say!

LIGNIÈRE: Good soul, he makes excuses. On my soul,
For a triolet, he gives . . .

RAGUENEAU (*apologetically*): A roll . . .
LIGNIÈRE (*severely*): *Milk* roll.
You love the theatre?
RAGUENEAU: I idolize it.
LIGNIÈRE: You pay your way,—Ah, I shall advertise it,—
With pastry always. Tell us . . . what was mustered
For to-day's entrance?
RAGUENEAU: Fifteen puffs, with custard.
My lord Cyrano lacks. I am surprised.
LIGNIÈRE: But why?
RAGUENEAU: Montfleury plays.
LIGNIÈRE: I am advised
That tun plays Phedon for us. Even so,
What's that to Cyrano?
RAGUENEAU: You did not know?
He hates Montfleury, sir, and doth engage
To keep him for four weeks from any stage.
LIGNIÈRE (*who is drinking his fourth little glass of rivesalte*):
Ah, well? . . .
RAGUENEAU: Montfleury plays.
CUIGY (*coming up with his party*): He can't help that.
RAGUENEAU: Oh, oh,
I've come to see.
CHRISTIAN: Who is this Cyrano?
CUIGY: When 't comes to fencing, he knows all the cards.
SECOND MARQUIS: Noble?
CUIGY: Enough . . . commission in the Guards.
(*He indicates a gentleman who enters the hall, apparently looking for someone.*) His friend, Le Bret, can tell you.
(*He calls.*) Le Bret!
(LE BRET *comes toward them.*) One sees
You seek,—is it for Bergerac?
LE BRET: Yes; I am not at ease.
CUIGY: Am I not right,—he's not like everyone?
LE BRET (*tenderly*): The rarest, finest spirit 'neath the sun.
RAGUENEAU: Rhymer . . .

CUIGY: And duellist . . .
BRISSAILLE: Physicist . . .
LE BRET: Musician.
LIGNIÈRE: What visage hetroclitical is his'n.
RAGUENEAU: Certes, I think grave Philip of Champaigne
Could never limn for us his portrait plain.
Extravagant, eccentric, sensitive, droll,
The great Jacque Callot, calling all the roll
Of his mad fighters, could not rival him.
Broad hat with triple plume; doublet a-trim,
Six-pointed; cape uplifted by his sword,—
Cocked like a rooster's tail upon my word,—
Prouder, i' faith, than any Artaban
Of Gascony since Gascony began.
His Punch's ruff surmounting, wondrous, shows
A nose. O, sirs, what nose is that there nose!
One can't see such a nose in any station,
Not crying, "No, that's pure exaggeration."
One thinks, "He'll doff it. 'Tis a thing to doff."—
My lord of Bergerac don't take it off.
LE BRET (*shaking his head*): He wears,—and who remarks it, dares his hate.
RAGUENEAU (*proudly*): His rapier looks like half the shears of Fate.
FIRST MARQUIS (*shrugging his shoulders*): He will not come.
RAGUENEAU: Yes . . . I will bet a hen
Roasted by Ragueneau.
THE MARQUIS (*laughing*): Done.
(*A murmur of admiration runs through the Hall.* ROXANE *enters her box. She sits down at the front, her chaperone takes the seat in the back of the box.* CHRISTIAN, *occupied with paying the waitress, doesn't see her.*)
SECOND MARQUIS (*with little affected cries*): Gentlemen!
She's dreadfully delicious.
FIRST MARQUIS: Like a peach
That smiles upon a cherry.

SECOND MARQUIS: She can reach,—
She is so fresh,—all hearts,—give each a cold.
CHRISTIAN (*raising his head, sees* ROXANE *and grips* LIGNIÈRE'S *arms excitedly*): 'Tis she.
LIGNIÈRE (*sipping his rivesalte*): She, is it?
CHRISTIAN: Yes. Speak quick. I am overbold . . .
LIGNIÈRE: Magdeleine Robin, whom they style Roxane,
Euphuist, . . .
CHRISTIAN: Alas!
LIGNIÈRE: Orphan, unmarried,—cousin to the man
Of whom we spoke, Cyrano.
(*At this moment a very elegant nobleman, wearing the order of the Holy Ghost on his breast, enters the box and, standing, chats a moment with* ROXANE.)
CHRISTIAN (*trembling*): Who is that?
LIGNIÈRE (*who is getting decidedly drunk, winking*): Tee-hee!
The Count of Guiche, but married, do you see,
To the niece of Richelieu. His heart's desire
Is to wed Roxane to a gloomy squire,—
My Lord of Valvert,—viconte,—feeble stuff.
It irks her, yet this Guiche has power enough
To persecute a simple citizen.
I watched his sly manoeuvering,—and then,
I put it in a ballad,—Oh, my eye,
It's naughty!—Lemme shing it.
(*He rises, staggering, glass lifted, ready to sing.*)
CHRISTIAN: No. Good-bye.
LIGNIÈRE: Going?
CHRISTIAN: To seek this Valvert.
LIGNIÈRE: Have a care.
He'll kill you. . . . Stay. Somebody's looking. There.
(*He just indicates* ROXANE.)
CHRISTIAN: It is true.
(*He stands, gazing. The group of cut-purses, seeing him stand, head lifted, lips parted, draw closer.*)
LIGNIÈRE: 'Tis I who go. I'm thirsty. Frien's 'll get

Tired, waitin' round in taverns. . . .
(*He goes out, staggering.*)

LE BRET (*who has made the rounds of the hall, returning to* RAGUENEAU, *and speaking cheerfully*): No Cyrano.

RAGUENEAU (*incredulous*): And yet . . .

LE BRET: I almost hope he hasn't seen the board.

THE HALL: Begin! Begin!

SCENE III

The Same, without LIGNIÈRE; *The* COUNT OF GUICHE; VALVERT; *later,* MONTFLEURY

A MARQUIS (*seeing the* COUNT OF GUICHE, *who leaves* ROXANE'S *box and crosses the pit, surrounded by obsequious noblemen, among whom is the* VISCOUNT OF VALVERT): He has his court, my word!

ANOTHER: Ff . . . Still a Gascon.

FIRST MARQUIS: But adroit, and cold,—
That kind succeeds. Come, let us join the fold.
(*They go toward the* COUNT OF GUICHE.)

SECOND MARQUIS: My Lord, your ribbons make a goodly show,—
Is the shade "Kiss-me-love," or "flank-of-doe"?

GUICHE: The shade is called "Dying-Spaniard."

FIRST MARQUIS: Good. The shade
Lies not,—because, sir, with your doughty aid
We drive the foe in Flanders.

GUICHE: I am ready
To mount the stage. Coming?
(*He goes toward the stage, followed by the marquises and other noblemen. He turns and calls*): Valvert!

CHRISTIAN (*who has heard and watched the party, trembles at hearing that name*): Valvert, said he?
Oh, in his face I'll hurl . . .
(*He puts his hand in his pocket and meets the hand of a cut-purse, in the act of robbing him.*)
What's this? I planned
To pluck my glove out . . .

THE CUT-PURSE (*ruefully*): And you plucked a hand.
(*In a different tone and speaking quick and low.*)
Loose me,—I'll tell a secret.
CHRISTIAN (*still holding him*): What?
THE CUT-PURSE: Lignière,
Who left you . . .
CHRISTIAN: Eh?
CUT-PURSE: Best patter his last prayer.
He made a song, touching great folk. He blundered.
A hundred men,—I'm one—will lie in wait . . .
CHRISTIAN: A hundred?
Who plots this thing?
THE CUT-PURSE: Sir, one must use discretion.
CHRISTIAN (*shrugging his shoulders*): Oh! . . .
THE CUT-PURSE (*with dignity*): One has the ethics, sir, of one's profession.
CHRISTIAN: Where do they lurk?
CUT-PURSE: Nesle Gate; dark as a cavern.
Best warn him, sir.
CHRISTIAN (*loosing his hold of the fellow's wrist*):
Where find him?
THE CUT-PURSE: Why, at any tavern.
Gold Wine-Press, Fir-Cone, Bursting-Belt, Two-Links.
Leave warning in them all. In all, he drinks.
A written word would be the safest plan.
CHRISTIAN: I go. The knaves! A hundred, 'gainst one man!
(*He looks longingly at* ROXANE.) To leave her, . . . her!
(*Furiously, looking at* VALVERT.) And him. But I must save
Lignière.
(*He goes out, running. The* COUNT OF GUICHE, *the viscount, the marquises and all the fashionable gentlemen have disappeared behind the curtain of the stage, to take their places on the benches ranged along the wings. The pit is completely filled. Not an empty place in stalls or galleries.*)

THE HALL: Begin!

A CITIZEN (*whose wig is suddenly lifted on a hook from a line thrown by one of the pages in the gallery*): My wig!

CRIES OF MIRTH: A rather sudden shave.
Bravo! Ha-ha-ha!

THE CITIZEN (*raging and shaking his fist*): Theft! Rapine! Violence!

(*Laughter and shouting, which begins noisily and then dies away.*) Ha-ha, ha-ha, ha-ha!

(*Silence.*)

LE BRET (*mystified*): This sudden silence?

(*A spectator whispers something in his ear*): Ah?

THE SPECTATOR (*importantly*): I have it on the best authority.

(*Whispers run through the hall*):
No. Yes. Box with the grill. Yes—no—'tis he.
The Cardinal! Cardinal? The Cardinal!

A PAGE: The devil,—now we'll have no fun at all!

(*A rap upon the stage. Everybody is quiet.*)

VOICE OF A MARQUIS (*in the stillness, behind the curtain*):
Snuff that candle.

ANOTHER (*poking his head between the curtain folds*):
Fetch a chair.

(*A chair is handed from hand to hand above the heads of the audience. The marquis takes it and his head disappears, not before he has thrown a few kisses toward the boxes.*)

A SPECTATOR (*testily*): Silence. Si-lence!

(*The three strokes are heard. The curtains are drawn apart. The marquises are sitting along the sides of the stage in studied poses. The setting shows a pastoral scene in soft tones of blue. Four little crystal lustres light the scene. The violins play softly.*)

LE BRET (*whispering to* RAGUENEAU): Montfleury enters?

RAGUENEAU (*low*): Yes; he will commence.

LE BRET: Cyrano is not here.

RAGUENEAU: I lose, you see!

LE BRET: So much the better!

(*Sound of shepherds' pipes.* MONTFLEURY *appears, enormous, in a shepherd's costume, a chaplet of roses tipped over one ear, and blowing be-ribboned pipes.*)

THE PIT (*applauding*): Montfleury! Montfleury!

MONTFLEURY: *How happy he who lives out all his days*
Far from the court,—akin to Nature's ways,
Who hears the voice of Zephyr when she speaks.

A VOICE (*from the middle of the pit*):
Knave, you were interdicted for four weeks.

(*Stupefaction. Everybody turns. Murmurs.*)

DIVERS VOICES: Hey? What? What's that?

CUIGY: 'Tis he.

LE BRET (*terrified*): Cyrano!

THE VOICE: King of clowns, I tell
You, leave the stage.

ALL THE HALL (*indignant*): Oh!

MONTFLEURY: But . . . but . . .

THE VOICE: You rebel?

DIVERS VOICES (*from pit and stalls*):
Tut tut! Montfleury, play! You have no need
To be afraid!

MONTFLEURY (*in a voice that lacks conviction*):
How happy he who lives out all . . .

THE VOICE (*more menacing*): Indeed?
Do you desire, in face of these beholders,
To feel my stick about your padded shoulders?

(*A cane upheld by a long arm waves above the heads in the pit.*)

MONTFLEURY (*in a voice that grows ever feebler*):
How hap . . .

THE VOICE: Begone!

THE PIT: Oh!

MONTFLEURY (*choking*): *Lives out, unafraid . . .*

CYRANO (*rising from the pit, stands on his chair, erect, arms*

folded, plumed hat in battle array, moustache bristling, nose terrible):

I shall be angry soon.

(*Sensation when the hall sees him.*)

SCENE IV

The Same. CYRANO; *later,* BELLEROSE, JODELET

MONTFLEURY (*to the marquises*): Sirs, to my aid!
Good sirs! . . .

A MARQUIS (*coolly*): Go on and play.

CYRANO: Begone! You pause?
Fat friend, I may be forced to box your jaws.

MARQUISES: Enough!

CYRANO: If any Marquis speak again,
His ribbon shall be fluttered by my cane.

ALL THE MARQUISES (*rising*): This is too much! Montfleury!

CYRANO: Montfleury goes,—
Lest I cut off his ears and slash his nose.

A VOICE: But . . .

CYRANO: He goes . . .

ANOTHER VOICE: Really . . .

CYRANO: He dares to stop?
(*With a gesture as if rolling up his sleeves.*)
I'll set the stage, then, as a cleaver's shop.
I'll carve this sausage, stuffed in Italy.

MONTFLEURY: You insult Thalia, in insulting me.

CYRANO (*very politely*):
If the Muse knew you, sir,—who knows you not,—
I think you'd wish yourself once more forgot.
Seeing you shaped so like an upturned bowl,
She would chastise you with her buskin's sole.

THE PIT: Montfleury! O, Montfleury! Baro's play!

CYRANO (*to those about him*): Have pity on my scabbard, friends, I pray.
He's clinging to his mistress, but I fear . . .
(*The circle widens.*)

THE CROWD (*recoiling*): He! La!
CYRANO (*to* MONTFLEURY): Begone!
THE CROWD (*surging closer, angrily*): Oh! Oh!
CYRANO (*turning quickly*): Who is that I hear?
(*A fresh retreat.*)
A VOICE (*in the back of the hall, singing*):
Cyrano of Bergerac
Bully and tease;
Though his permission lack,
We'll have *Clorise!*
ALL THE HALL (*singing*): We'll have *Clorise!*
CYRANO: Unless that song immediately is dumb,
I'll slay you all.
A CITIZEN: Aha, has Samson come?
CYRANO: To make the test, lend me your jaw-bone, friend.
A LADY (*from her stall*): Unheard of . . .
A GENTLEMAN: Scandalous . . .
A CITIZEN: This thing must end.
A PAGE: A lovely time! . . .
THE PIT: K . . s . . s! Montfleury! Cyrano!
CYRANO: Silence!
THE PIT (*deliriously*): Hew-haw! buzz-z-z! S-s-st! Cocorico!
CYRANO: I bid . . .
A PAGE: Miauw!
CYRANO: I bid you hold your tongue.
I challenge all the pit, both old and young.
I'll write the names and take the numbers here.
Heroes, approach. You see . . . the way is clear.
You, sir? No? You? To the first duellist,
The honour due to him who heads a list.
All who seek death have but to speak the word.
(*Silence.*) Too modest, eh—to see a naked sword?
Well, to my task. A swelling, inflammation,
Infects the stage. . . . Perhaps . . .
(*He fingers his sword.*) . . . an operation. . . .
MONTFLEURY: I . . .

CYRANO (*coming down off his chair, seats himself as if he were at his own fireside, in the middle of the circle that has formed around him*): I shall clap thrice, Full Moon.
When I have done,
Eclipse yourself.
THE PIT (*amused*): Ah, ho, ho, ho, ho!
CYRANO (*clapping his hands*): One.
MONTFLEURY: I . . .
A VOICE (*from the stalls*): Stay!
THE PIT: He'll stay! . . . He won't! . . .
MONTFLEURY: Woe's me!
I think, sirs, . . .
CYRANO: Two.
MONTFLEURY: 'Twere really wiser . . .
CYRANO: Three!
(MONTFLEURY *disappears as if the floor had opened and swallowed him. A storm of laughter, howls and hisses.*)
Ho, ho! Coward! Come back!
CYRANO (*turns and crosses his arms*): If he should dare return . . .
A CITIZEN: Our orator!
(BELLEROSE *comes forward and bows.*)
THE BOXES: Bellerose!
BELLEROSE (*with elegance*): Sirs, you shall learn . . .
THE PIT: No! Jodelet! Go back!
JODELET (*comes forward; he speaks with a nasal drawl*):
You flock of sheep . . .
THE PIT: Ah, ha! Bravo! Bravo!
JODELET: Aye, now you cheep!
Our paunchy actor, whom you love,—Alack,
Is driven . . .
THE PIT: Coward!
JODELET: Forced . . .
THE PIT: Let him come back!
VOICES: Come back!
SOME: No!

OTHERS: Yes!

A YOUNG MAN (*to* CYRANO): It's all so puzzling;
Why do you hate Montfleury?

CYRANO: Why, young gosling?
I have two reasons. Either would suffice.
Primo, an actor having every vice
Of manner, breathing, voice. He mouths his words;
Heaves up on winches what should fly like birds.
Secundo,—that's my secret!

THE OLD CITIZEN (*with the son*): Have you not any
Shame,—to deprive us of *Clorise?*

CYRANO (*turning, respectfully*): Old jennet,
Old Baro's verses are not worth a—zero.
Ruthless, I interrupt.

THE EUPHUISTS (*from the stall*): Ah, shame! Our Baro!
My *dear.* . . . Could *any one* . . .

CYRANO (*turning his chair toward the boxes, gallantly*):
Ye radiant ones,
Cup-bearers of our dreams,—flowers, stars, and suns,
Beneath whose smiles, death's pangs were all forgot,
Inspire our verses still,—but judge them not!

BELLEROSE: What of the money?

CYRANO (*turning his chair toward the stage*):
Bellerose, I say,
That's the first word of sense I've heard to-day.
Tear not the Thespian robe to which we clung!
(*He stands up and tosses a bag to the stage.*)
So catch this as it flies, and hold your tongue.

THE HALL (*dazzled*): Oh! Ah!

JODELET (*catching it and feeling its weight*):
At this rate, sir, be quite at ease.
Come every evening to forbid *Clorise.*

THE HALL: Ho! Ha!

JODELET: Though none of us should be allowed to start.

BELLEROSE: Well, well, let's clear the hall.

JODELET: Let all depart.

(*The audience drifts away,* CYRANO *watching contentedly. But the dispersing crowd is checked by the episode which follows, and their departure is arrested. The ladies in the stalls, already standing and putting on their wraps, stop to listen and finally take their seats again.*)

LE BRET (*to* CYRANO): What folly!

A CHURL (*approaching* CYRANO): Our comedian! What a scandal!
He is protected by the Duke of Candal.
Have you a patron?

CYRANO: No.

CHURL: You haven't?

CYRANO: No.

CHURL: What, no great nobleman to shield you? So?

CYRANO (*exasperated*): No, I've twice told you. You'd have thrice, no less?
Nay,—no protector. (*He puts his hand on his sword*)
But a protectress.

THE CHURL: But you will quit the town?

CYRANO: That's as I will.

THE CHURL: The great Duke's arm is long.

CYRANO: But longer still
Is mine when (*he touches his sword*)
I have made it so extreme.

THE CHURL: You would not dream of daring . . .

CYRANO: I would dream.

THE CHURL: But . . .

CYRANO: Turn on your heel and march.

THE CHURL: But . . .

CYRANO: Turn your toes.
—Or tell me why you are looking at my nose.

THE CHURL (*panic-stricken*): I . . .

CYRANO (*marching up to him*): Is it amazing?

THE CHURL (*shrinking back*): Your grace mistook my glance.

CYRANO: Is it pliant, wavering,—like an elephant's?

THE CHURL (*same*): N-n-no.

CYRANO: Or like an owl's beak do you see it bend?
THE CHURL: But . . .
CYRANO: You discern a wart upon its end?
THE CHURL: Nay . . .
CYRANO: Perchance, a fly that promenades withal?
Is't hetrolitic?
THE CHURL: Oh! . . .
CYRANO: Phenomenal?
THE CHURL: I was so careful not to look, God knows.
CYRANO: And why, sir, if you please, not see my nose?
THE CHURL: I have . . .
CYRANO: Then it disgusts you?
THE CHURL: Sir . . .
CYRANO: In doubtful taste
You find its colour?
THE CHURL: Sir . . .
CYRANO: Its form debased?
THE CHURL: Oh, not at all.
CYRANO: Then what's the fault you charge?
You find my nose, belike, a little large?
THE CHURL (*gibbering*): I find it very little,—small and wee.
CYRANO: Hey? What? Accuse me of such idiocy?
Little? My nose? Hola!
THE CHURL: 'Faith! . . .
CYRANO: My enormous nose.
Vile flat-nose, flat-head, man-without-a-nose,
Learn,—this appendage fills my heart with pride,
For in a large nose always, is descried
A nature affable and wise and good
Liberal, courageous. Be it understood,—
Of all the qualities you dare not claim,—
You filthy knave, face dedicate to shame
That should be grateful if I make it smart.
Equally void . . . (*He cuffs him.*)
THE CHURL: Ouch! . . .
CYRANO: Of grace, of lyric art,

Of vividness,—of all that shines or glows,
Of richness, glory,—in a word of Nose—
(*He whirls him about by the shoulders, fitting the action to the word.*)
As . . . what my booted foot shall swiftly find.

THE CHURL: Help! Help! The Guard!

CYRANO: Let churls keep that in mind,
Who find the middle of my face a joke.
To noble jesters,—unlike meaner folk,—
I give, e'er knight and knave escape together,—
An *inch* of steel, and not a *foot* of leather.

THE COUNT OF GUICHE (*coming down with the marquises*):
He tires one, in the end.

VISCOUNT OF VALVERT (*shrugging his shoulders*):
The fellow blusters.

GUICHE: None musters wit to answer.

VALVERT: No one musters
So much of spirit? Watch me. Let's make merry.
(*He goes toward Cyrano and stares at him with a fatuous air.*)
You have a nose . . . a nose . . . a big nose.

CYRANO (*gravely*): Very.

THE VISCOUNT (*laughing*): Hee-hee!

CYRANO (*imperturbable*): Is that all?

THE VISCOUNT: Well . . .

CYRANO: You are curtailed, young man.
One might say . . . Oh, good Lord, if one began,—
Varying the tone; come, let us just suppose,—
Aggressive: "Sir, if I had such a nose,
I'd cut it off, so much 'twould cut me up."
Friendly: "It oft must plunge, sir, in your cup;—
Best make a goblet of a special shape."
Descriptive: "'Tis a rock,—a cliff,—a cape.
A cape, quotha? Surely a promontory."
Curious: "What is that thing,—let's have the story,—

A tool box, or, perhaps a writing case?"
Gracious: "You must love birds to have a place
Paternally prepared,—I call it sweet,—
To make a safe perch for their tiny feet."
Truculent: "Sir, be careful when you smoke,
Lest you make trouble for all honest folk,—
Lest neighbors run and cry, 'A chimney fire!' "
Careful: "Pray hold your head a little higher,
Else such a weight will surely make you fall."
Solicitous: "Sir, take a parasol,
Lest its bright hue be faded by the sun."
Pedantic: "Aristophanes knew one,—
Hippocampelephantecamelos
Was made to carry, certes, such a nose."
Lightly: "Why, friend, a most commodious rack
To hang one's hat,—where space will never lack."
Emphatic: "Fierce Euroclydon, behold,
Needs all his power to give that nose a cold."
Dramatic: " 'Tis the Red Sea when it bleeds."
Admiring: " 'Tis the sign the chemist needs."
Lyric: "A conche and you a triton, say?"
Simple: "A monument. When's visiting day?"
Respectful: "Come, the landed gentry greet.
Here's one who has a gable on the street."
Rustic: "Why look-a-here. A nose? I tell 'un
'Tis a prize turnip,—or a stunted melon."
Soldierly: "Charge, heavy artillery."
Practical: "Put it in the lottery.
Assuredly 'twould be, sir, the Grand Prize."
Or, last, like Pyramus, with streaming eyes:
"No wonder that nose blushes;—wicked traitor
Who mars his master, shaming his Creator."
Here are a few things, sir, you might have said,
Had you or wit or learning. But instead,
You wretched fop who trifle with your betters,
You have no spark of wit;—and as for letters,

You have just four, to write you down a fool.
Had you one grain, from nature or from school,
Before these galleries you might have played
With some such fancies as myself displayed;—
—But not the fourth part of them all have spoke,
Nay, nor the half of one,—for I may joke,
Jest, as my mood or mockery may nerve me,—
But as I serve myself let no man serve me.

GUICHE (*seeking to lead the petrified viscount away*):
Viscount, come away.

VALVERT: But, heavens above,
This ruffian . . . why . . . he hasn't even a glove;
He has no ribbons, . . . no rosettes . . . no laces.

CYRANO: Sir, it is on my soul I wear my graces.
I'm not bedizened like a silly lad,
I go, less gaily, but more nobly, clad.
I walk not forth in garments carelessly
Cleaned of affronts or stains. There walks with me
No conscience blear-eyed, blinking at the day,
No honour frayed, no scruples in decay.
When I go forth all sparkles in the light.
I am beplumed with freedom and my right.
Not my pinched waist must make my best appeal.
It is my soul that goes locked up in steel.
Exploits I wear, not ribbons for my part,
No curled moustaches, but uplifted heart.
One man who walks among you still prefers
Music of ringing truth to ringing spurs.

THE VISCOUNT: But, sir . . .

CYRANO: I have no gloves? A great affair!
I still have one, sir, of an ancient pair.
I found its fellow useful in like case.
I threw it, for a cause, in someone's face.

THE VISCOUNT: Braggart and rascal! Flat foot! Head of cheese!

CYRANO (*taking off his hat and bowing low, as if acknowledging an introduction*):

Ah? . . . And I, Cyrano Savien Hercules
Of Bergerac.
(*Laughter.*)

THE VISCOUNT (*exasperated*): Buffoon.

CYRANO (*crying out as if something hurt him*): Ouch! Ouch!

THE VISCOUNT (*who had turned and was walking away, turning to* CYRANO): What? Is there more to come?

CYRANO (*with grimaces of pain*):

I've got to help her out. She has grown numb.
That shows you it's a foolish thing to keep . . .
Ouch! . . .

THE VISCOUNT: What's amiss?

CYRANO: My sword has gone to sleep!

THE VISCOUNT (*drawing his own*): So be it.

CYRANO: I've a stroke,—a charming thing.

VISCOUNT (*scornfully*): Poet!

CYRANO: Yes, poet, fencing as I sing.
While the steel clashes, I shall improvise
A ballad.

THE VISCOUNT: A ballad.

CYRANO: You show surprise?
You don't know what that is?

VISCOUNT: But . . .

CYRANO (*like a pedagogue*): A ballad, know,
Must have three stanzas of eight lines; also
The rule requires an envoy, having four.

VISCOUNT (*stamping with rage*): You . . .

CYRANO: I'll make a ballad, fighting you; and more,
I'll pink you on the last line.

VISCOUNT: No.

CYRANO: No? Let's see;—
(*Declaiming*) The Ballad of the Battle of the Hotel Burgundy,—
My Lord Cyrano lends a braggart fame.

VISCOUNT: What do you think that is?
CYRANO: The ballad's name.
THE HALL (*excited to the highest pitch*):
Give place! Oh, most amusing! . . . Make a ring!
(*A circle of curious onlookers; marquises and officers mingling with citizens and simple folk; pages climbing on shoulders to see better; all the ladies standing in their stalls. On the right, the* COUNT OF GUICHE *and his followers. Left,* LE BRET, RAGUENEAU, CUIGY, *etc.*)
CYRANO (*closing his eyes for a second*):
Wait. . . . I must choose my rhymes. . . . The very thing. . . .
(*He fits action to rhyme and rhythm.*)
My plumèd hat aside I throw;
Swiftly my mantle is undone;
Lightly I cast it from me, so;
And I unsheath my espadon.
Graceful, superb, as Celadon;
Agile as Scaramouch, I scutch.
I warn you fairly, mirmydon,
At the envoy's end, I touch.

Better that unprovoked I go.
Where were the pinking best begun?
The brave, slashed sleeve above, . . . below?
The heart, beneath the blue cordon?
The merry music has begun.
A pretty volt,—not overmuch.
That drum it would resound upon.
There, at the envoy, I touch.

O for a rhyme, a rhyme in O.
Your cheek is white. Its colours run.
My rhyme, this pallor that you show.
You thought to thrust, thou hapless one?

I parry,—broach,—the trick is done.
Thy needle hold in careful clutch,—
Thy basting needle, Laridon.
At the envoy's end, I touch.

(*He announces solemnly*):
Prince, be thy latest prayer begun.
I shift in carte. . . . My feint is such.
And such my lunge. . . . Hola, 'tis done.
(*The viscount reels.* CYRANO *salutes.*)
At the envoy's end, I touch.

(*Acclamation. Applause from the boxes. Flowers and handkerchiefs flutter down. Officers crowd around and felicitate* CYRANO. RAGUENEAU *dances with enthusiasm.* LE BRET *is happy, but uneasy. The friends of the viscount support him and lead him away.*)

THE CROWD (*with a long breath*): Ah!
A TROOPER: Superb!
A LADY: Pretty!
RAGUENEAU: Phenomarvelous!
A MARQUIS: New!
LE BRET: Madness!
(*A throng about* CYRANO. *One catches the words*):
Felicitations! . . . Bravo! . . . You
Are splendid!
A WOMAN'S VOICE: A hero!
A MUSKETEER (*advancing toward* CYRANO, *his hand extended eagerly*): Sir, if you permit,
'Twas well done. And I know the game a bit.
I never stamped so hard. It made me cheer.
(*He goes off.*)
CYRANO (*to* CUIGY): Who's that?
CUIGY: That? That's Artagnan, the Musketeer.
LE BRET (*to* CYRANO, *taking his arm*): A talk. . . .
CYRANO: Wait till the rabble leaves. I tire of this.
(*To* BELLEROSE): May I stay?

BELLEROSE (*respectfully*): Yes . . .

(*One hears a tumult and cries without.*)

JODELET (*looking out*): Montfleury . . . whom they hiss!

BELLEROSE (*solemnly*): *Sic transit.*

(*Changing his tone, as he speaks to the porter, the candle-snuffer*) Sweep. Lock up. But leave the light.
There is a new farce to rehearse to-night.
Just long enough to dine we toilers pause.
(JODELET *and* BELLEROSE *go out, after having bowed profoundly to* CYRANO.)

PORTER (*to* CYRANO): You do not dine, sir?

CYRANO: I? No.

(*The porter goes out.*)

LE BRET (*to* CYRANO): Why?

CYRANO (*haughtily*): Because . . .

(*Seeing that the porter is out of hearing.*)
I have no money.

LE BRET (*making a gesture of tossing something*):
What you tossed away?

CYRANO: Paternal pension perished in a day.

LE BRET: How will you live this month? Ah, do arrest your Folly. Thrown away! What madness!

CYRANO: What a gesture!

THE WAITRESS (*coughing, behind her little counter*): Hum . . .

(CYRANO *and* LE BRET *turn. She comes forward shyly.*)
Sir . . . to know you fast . . . it makes me wild. . . .
(*Showing her stand.*) Here, sir, is all you want. . . . Please . . .

CYRANO: You dear child,
Although my Gascon pride forbids my taking
From your kind hands one morsel of your making,
I fear lest I should wound your generous heart.
I shall accept, then . . .
(*He goes to the booth and makes his selection.*)
Of these grapes, a part.
(*She urges him to take the cluster. He takes a grape.*)

Just one. . . . This glass of water.
(*She tries to pour wine in the glass, he checks her.*)
. . . Clear. And, willy nilly,
Half of this macaroon.
(*She tries to make him take a plate of cakes; he breaks one in half and puts part of it back on the plate.*)

LE BRET: But this is silly!

THE WAITRESS: Oh, something more . . .

CYRANO: Yes,—your kind hand to kiss.
(*He kisses, as if it had been that of a princess, the hand she holds out to him.*)

THE WAITRESS: I thank you, sir.
(*She curtsies.*) Good night.
(*She goes out.*)

SCENE V

CYRANO; LE BRET; *later, the Porter*

CYRANO: While eating this,
I'll hear thy scolding.
(*He sits down at the booth and arranges before him his macaroon.*) Dinner.
(*The glass of water.*) Refreshment.
(*The grape.*) Dessert. I shall dine . . .
O Lord, this giant appetite of mine.
Thou sayst? . . .

LE BRET: I say, thou dost thy nature wrong,
Being swayed by such a swaggering, braggart throng.
If we sought men of sense, they could inform us
The true effect of acts like this.

CYRANO (*finishing his macaroon*): Enormous.

LE BRET: The Cardinal . . .

CYRANO (*beaming*): The Cardinal was there?

LE BRET: He must have found . . .

CYRANO: The entertainment fair.

LE BRET: But . . .

CYRANO: He is an author. 'Tis no playwright's way
To mind the ruin of another's play.
LE BRET: Truly, thou mak'st too many enemies.
CYRANO (*beginning to eat his grape*):
How many for this evening, an it please?
LE BRET: Forty,—without the ladies.
CYRANO: Come, the count.
LE BRET: Montfleury, the old man, son, Guiche, the Count,
Baro, the Academy . . .
CYRANO: Enough I am satisfied.
LE BRET: Where will it lead at last, this foolish pride?
What is thy aim?
CYRANO: In labyrinths I wandered;
On diverse parts my divers gifts were squandered.
I choose . . .
LE BRET: Eh, which?
CYRANO: This;—Let what will befall
Always I will be admirable, in all.
LE BRET (*shrugging his shoulders*):
So be it. But, in confidence between us,
Why do you hate Montfleury?
CYRANO: That Silenus
Thinks he's a lady-killer. And he tries
To cast carp's eyes, with his popped bull-frog's eyes.
I hate him since he dared to let them seek
One day . . . one moment . . . my dear lady's cheek.
Methought I saw a loathly fat slug move
Upon a rose.
LE BRET (*stupefied*): Can it be . . .
CYRANO (*with a bitter laugh*): That I love?
(*Changing his tone, and gravely.*) I love.
LE BRET: And may thy friend know what thou hast so hidden?
CYRANO: Whom I love? Nay. . . . Look! think! I am forbidden
To dream of love how plain soe'er she be,—
My nose arrives so long ahead of me.

Whom do I love then? 'Tis in vain I strive,—
I love,—even I,—the loveliest maid alive.

LE BRET: The loveliest? . . .

CYRANO: Quite simply, 'neath the sun.
Most brilliant, finest,
(*With deep dejection*) And the fairest one.

LE BRET: Ah, God, who is this lady?

CYRANO: Mortal danger,
Unwitting; fair; to vanity a stranger;
Nature's own snare; a moss rose, set apart
Whence love in ambush wings his deadliest dart.
Who sees her smile has seen a perfect thing.
She gives a grace to nothing,—everything;
Divinities in her least gesture dwell.
Not thou, O Venus, rising from thy shell,
Nor thou, Diana, in thy woodland, fair
As she in Paris in her sedan chair.

LE BRET: Sapristi! It is clear.

CYRANO: Transparent man.

LE BRET: Thy cousin, Magdeleine Robin?

CYRANO: Yes, Roxane.

LE BRET: Thou lovest her? Tell her! For I do surmise
Thou art to-day a hero in her eyes.

CYRANO: Nay. Shall I woo the loveliest maid in France,—
Look at me, friend,—with this protuberance?
Ah, I have no illusions. Though in faith,
Sometimes, enchanted by the twilight's breath
I walk in gardens; smell the dew-wet rose
—Yes, with my poor big devil of a nose,—
I breathe Spring's magic. 'Neath a silver ray
I watch a lover and a maiden stray;
I dream, even I, of walking 'neath that beam,
Loving, beloved, scarce moving. As I dream
My soul expands, exults,—but soars to fall.
I see my profile shadowed on the wall.

LE BRET (*moved*): My friend.

CYRANO: I have bad moments, friend. Sometimes I keep
Apart, knowing myself so ugly and . . .
LE BRET (*tenderly, seizing his hand*): You weep?
CYRANO: No, never that. Ah, how could you suppose
I would let a tear roll down this length of nose?
Never will I, so long as I am master,
Let beauty so divine meet such disaster,—
Ugliness mar perfection. There appears
Upon this earth naught more sublime than tears,
I would submit to torture, on my word,
Rather than make a single tear absurd.
LE BRET: Love is a hazard always. Why despair?
CYRANO: Loving Nile's sorceress, have I Cæsar's air?
Adoring Berenice, am I Titus?
LE BRET: Thy courage, man! Thy wit! Say,—did she slight us
The little one who spread your modest feast?
Thou art not hateful in her eyes at least.
CYRANO (*impressed*): That's true.
LE BRET: Well, then. I, too, saw Roxane quail,
Turn pale to watch thy duel.
CYRANO: Roxane . . . pale?
LE BRET: Hearts follow oft where admiration goes.
Speak to her. Speak.
CYRANO: If she should mock my nose?
No! That's the only thing on earth I fear.
THE PORTER (*who admits someone, to* CYRANO):
Sir, someone seeks . . .
CYRANO (*seeing* ROXANE'S *duenna*): God! Her duenna, here!

SCENE VI

CYRANO, LE BRET, the DUENNA

THE DUENNA (*with a profound curtsey*):
To her brave cousin, one sends greeting, who
Wishes in secret to see him.
CYRANO (*overwhelmed*): See *me?*

THE DUENNA (*with another curtsey*): Yes, you.
Since one has things to tell you.
CYRANO: Th . . . things?
THE DUENNA (*bobbing another curtsey*): To say.
CYRANO (*trembling*): Lord God!
THE DUENNA: One goes to-morrow at the first pink ray
Of dawn, to hear mass at St. Roche.
CYRANO (*leaning on* LE BRET *for support*): Lord God! . . .
to pray. . . .
DUENNA: On coming out, where may one speak a word?
CYRANO (*babbling*): Where? . . . I . . . God . . . where?
O my Lord! . . .
DUENNA: Say quickly.
CYRANO: I . . . am thinking . . . I . . . am bound . . .
DUENNA: Where?
CYRANO: . . . Ragueneau, . . . the . . . pastry cook's. . . .
DUENNA: And he is found? . . .
CYRANO: What street?—St. Honore.—My God! I swear . . .
THE DUENNA (*withdrawing*): At seven, then. Be there.
CYRANO: Yes . . . I'll be there.
(*The duenna goes out.*)

SCENE VII

CYRANO, LE BRET; *later, the Actors,* CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, LIGNIÈRE; *Porter, Violins*

CYRANO (*falling into* LE BRET'S *arms*):
Me . . . to meet her!
LE BRET: Eh did I not insist?
CYRANO: She knows,—at least she knows, that I exist.
LE BRET: And now thou wilt be calm?
CYRANO: Now I will be
Frantic and fulminating, fearless, free.
A bannered army could not fright me now.
I have ten hearts and twenty arms I vow.
Give me not dwarfs . . .

(*He cries aloud.*) Give giants to disperse.

(*In the background, the stage has been filling with players, who move about, whispering; they begin reciting their lines; the violins take their places.*)

A VOICE: Silence, in front. We're going to rehearse.

CYRANO (*laughing*): We are going.

(*He goes up, just as the great door at the back partly opens and admits* CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, *and a number of officers, who support* LIGNIÈRE, *who is helplessly, completely, drunk.*)

CUIGY: Cyrano!

CYRANO: What's this?

CUIGY: Well may'st thou stare,—
Drunk as an owl.

CYRANO (*recognizing him*): Hola! What's wrong, Lignière?

CUIGY: He sought thee.

BRISSAILLE: For he can't go home.

CYRANO: Why not?

LIGNIÈRE (*thickly, and displaying a crumpled bit of paper*):
Thish letter sash . . . a hundred . . . a great lot,
Lyin' in wait; . . . don't like that song of mine.
At the Nesle Gate. . . . I'm sleepy. Can't get mine,
So I'll take thy bed, if thou'lt gimme room.

CYRANO: A hundred men? Nay, thou shalt sleep at home!

LIGNIÈRE (*startled*): But . . .

CYRANO (*in a terrible voice, pointing to the link held by the porter, who has stopped to listen*): Take that light.

(LIGNIÈRE *seizes it precipitately.*) And march. For I have said
I'll be your shelter. I will make your bed.

(*To the officers.*)
Come ye, as witnesses. But do not press.

CUIGY: A hundred!

CYRANO: I to-night could meet no less.

(*The players, coming down from the stage, in divers costumes, crowd around.*)

LE BRET: But why protect . . .
CYRANO: Le Bret, who scolds at once!
LE BRET: This drunken fool?
CYRANO: Because this drunken dunce,
This keg of wine, this sodden liquor tun,
Once, in my sight, a pretty thing has done.
Coming from Mass, he saw his mistress take
Some holy water, and for her sweet sake,
He,—who fears water,—to the font did fly
And bravely bent his head and drank it dry.
AN ACTRESS (*costumed as an Abigail*): Ah, that was gentle.
CYRANO: Was 't not, Abigail?
THE ACTRESS (*to the others*): But why five score to make one poet quail?
CYRANO: Forward! And you, sirs, who shall see me fight,
I charge you come not nigh, whate'er my plight.
ANOTHER ACTRESS (*jumping from the stage*): I am going to see.
CYRANO: Come.
ANOTHER (*leaping from the stage, to an older actor*):
Come thou, Cassander.
CYRANO: Come all, the Doctor, Isabelle, Leander.
Come, charming, motley multitude! We'll see
Italian farce with Spanish tragedy.
To our alarums add your raptures keen,
As tinkling bells surround a tambourine.
ALL THE ACTRESSES (*in a joyful flurry*):
A mantle! Quick, my hood! The play begins.
JODELET: We'll go.
CYRANO (*to the orchestra*): Come, play an air, ye violins.
(*The violins join the procession that is forming. Somebody snatches the lighted candles from the sconces that make the footlights. It becomes a torchlight parade.*)
Bravo. The soldiers, players in costume,
And twenty paces in advance . . .
(*He goes forward as he speaks*) My plume.
Above my brow let flames of glory flicker,—

Prouder than Scipio and thrice Nasica!
'Tis understood? No man shall aid me, more
Than by his presence. Now . . . fling wide the door.
(*The porter throws the great door open. A corner of old Paris is seen in the dim moonlight.*)
Paris before us, wrapped in veils of mist,
Her sloping roofs by passing moonbeams kissed.
Exquisite frame for our heroic scene.
The Seine below, though mists may intervene,
Lies like a magic mirror, tremblingly
Waiting, like you, to see—what you shall see!

ALL: To the Nesle Gate!

CYRANO (*erect on the threshold*): To the Nesle Gate!

ALL: Nesle Gate!

CYRANO (*before starting, he turns to the actress,* ABIGAIL):
I think, my dear, 'twas you who asked of late
Why five score cut-throats on one many attend?
(*He draws his sword, and, tranquilly*):
'Twas known the rhymer had me for a friend.
(*He goes out. The procession, with* LIGNIÈRE *zigzagging at the head, then the actresses on the arms of the officers, then the actors pranking as they go, marches into the night, to the music of the violins and illuminated by the flickering brightness of the candles.*)

(*Curtain*)

ACT II

The Poet's Bake Shop

The shop of Ragueneau, *roaster and pastry cook. A great kitchen at the intersection of St. Honore and Abre Sec. Seen through the glass panes in the door, at the back, the streets are gray in the first light of dawn.*

In the foreground, at the left, a counter is surmounted by a stand of wrought iron, from which depend geese, ducks, and white peacocks. In big crockery vases are common garden flowers, chiefly sunflowers. On the same side, farther back, a huge fireplace, in front of which, between monstrous andirons on each of which is a small kettle, roasts turn and sizzle into dripping-pans.

At the right, front, a door. Farther back, a staircase leads to a tiny dining-room under the roof, a little room whose interior is seen through the open shutters; a table is set and a tiny Flemish lustre is lighted. A wooden gallery, following the staircase, seems to lead to other little dining-rooms.

In the middle of the shop, an iron ring hung with game may be lifted or lowered, by a chain.

The ovens glow in the shadows under the staircase. Copper gleams. The spits turn. Pastries in pyramids. Hams hung from hooks.

It is the busy hour when the ovens are heated hottest. A swarm of scared scullions, fat cooks and little 'prentices. A sea of caps bedecked with chicken feathers or guinea wings. On great pieces of sheet iron, or in wicker trays, are quantities of pastries and fancy dishes of all kinds.

Tables are spread with platters of cakes and rolls. Some, with chairs placed, await their guests.

A little table in a corner is covered with a mass of papers.

Ragueneau *is discovered there, as the curtain rises. He is writing.*

SCENE I

RAGUENEAU; *Cooks and 'Prentices; later,* LISE. RAGUENEAU, *at the little table, writing with a rapt air and counting on his fingers.*

FIRST COOK (*showing a mounted piece*): Almond cakes!
SECOND COOK (*bringing a mold*): Custard.
THIRD COOK (*bringing a roast dish decked with feathers*):
Peacock.
FOURTH COOK (*carrying a tray*): Brown roast.
FIFTH COOK (*bringing an earthenware dish*): Stew.
RAGUENEAU (*quits writing and raises his head*):
Upon the saucepans gleams the dawn anew.
Stifle, my soul, thy song, the gods' best dower.
The lute's hour passes,—'tis the oven's hour.
(*He stands up. To a cook.*)
A dust of flour. That pastry is too short.
THE COOK: How much?
RAGUENEAU: Two feet.
(*He passes, leaving the cook staring after him and saying*):
Huh?
FIRST PASTRY COOK: A tartlet.
SECOND COOK: A new sort.
RAGUENEAU (*standing in front of the fireplace*):
Depart, my Muse. I pray thee now retire,
Lest thy sweet eyes be reddened by my fire.
(*To a pastry cook, pointing to some fancy pastry*)
You have misplaced the dent in all these dishes.
Ceasura falls between the hemistiches.
(*To another, showing an imperfect tart.*)
This pasty palace lacks, as yet, a roof.
(*To a small apprentice who, sitting on the floor, is stringing poultry on a spit*)
Place thou on this long rod, at my behoof,
The modest pullet, turkey cock superb;—
Alternate them, my son, as old Malherbe
Used measures long, then short. So I discern
My roasts like strophes on the spit shall turn.

ANOTHER APPRENTICE (*advancing with a dish carefully covered*):
Master, I've made, because of my desire
To please you this . . . this pastry.
(*He uncovers the dish and proudly displays a great pastry model of . . .*)
RAGUENEAU (*dazzled*): It's a lyre!
THE APPRENTICE: All of puff pastry.
RAGUENEAU (*touched*): And of sugared fruit.
THE APPRENTICE: See, sir, I made spun sugar cords, to boot.
RAGUENEAU (*giving him a piece of silver*): Go drink my health.
(*He sees* LISE, *who enters.*) My wife. 'Sh. Make no fuss.
And hide the coin!
(*To* LISE, *showing the lyre with some embarrassment*)
Handsome?
LISE: Ridiculous.
(*She puts a pile of paper sacks on the table.*)
RAGUENEAU: Sacks? Thank you. That is good.
(*He examines them.*) My precious books!
To hold the biscuit some apprentice cooks!
The verses of my friends, dismembered thus!
So the bacchantes dealt with Orpheus.
LISE (*acidly*): I couldn't make them into coin nor raiment,—
And that was all them poets left in payment.
Yes, every poet left some limping line.
RAGUENEAU: Ant, who insult my cicacas divine!
LISE: Before they came, though praise was always scanty,
You never called me ant,—nor yet bacchante!
RAGUENEAU: To use poems so!
LISE: To find a use for those!
RAGUENEAU: Woman, I wonder what you'd do to prose.

SCENE II

The Same. Two Children who have entered

RAGUENEAU: What do you want, dears?
FIRST CHILD: Three pies.

RAGUENEAU (*serving them*): Well-browned, see?
And smoking hot.
SECOND CHILD: Please wrap 'em up for me.
RAGUENEAU (*aside, distressed*): Alas, my bags
(*To the child*) Huh? Wrap them up? Let's see.
(*He takes a sack and as he is about to put the pies in it, he reads*):
"Even as Ulysses left Penelope . . ."
Not that one.
(*He puts it aside and takes another. As he is putting the cakes in it, he reads*):
"Ah, fair Phoebus," Oh, not this.
LISE (*impatiently*): What makes you dally so?
RAGUENEAU (*takes a third, resignedly*): Child, here it is.
"Sonnet to Phyllis." All the same, I warn ye
It's hard.
LISE (*shrugging her shoulders*):
Well, well, at last! . . . The silly Sawny!
(*She climbs on a chair and begins to arrange the china on a plate rail.*)
RAGUENEAU (*profiting by the fact that her back is turned, recalls the children who are at the door*):
'Pst, dears. Bring back the sonnet on the sack.
I'll make it six pies, if you bring it back.
(*The children hand back the bag with avidity, clutch the six pies and go out.* RAGUENEAU, *ripping the bag open with his thumb, begins to read, declaiming*):
"Phyllis!" That sweet name buttered! And a smudge of flour. "Phyllis!"
(CYRANO *enters hurriedly.*)

SCENE III

RAGUENEAU, LISE, CYRANO; *later, the Trooper*

CYRANO: What time is it?
RAGUENEAU (*bowing profoundly*): Six o'clock.

CYRANO (*with emotion*): In one hour!
RAGUENEAU (*following him*): Bravo! I saw . . .
CYRANO: Eh? What?
RAGUENEAU: Your combat.
CYRANO: Combat?
RAGUENEAU: At the Hotel of Burgundy.
CYRANO (*disdainfully*): Oh, that!
RAGUENEAU (*admiringly*): Duel in verse.
LISE: He just can't say too much.
CYRANO: Come now. That's good.
RAGUENEAU (*fencing with a basting needle which he seizes*):
"At the envoy's end, I touch."
"At the envoy's end I touch." And done just so.
(*With mounting enthusiasm*) At the envoy's end. . . .
CYRANO: What time is it, Ragueneau?
RAGUENEAU (*still on guard, basting needle poised, looks at the clock*):
Five minutes past. "I touch." That's hard to match.
LISE (*to* CYRANO, *who in passing the counter has absent-mindedly pressed his hand*): What is the matter with your hand?
CYRANO: A scratch.
RAGUENEAU: You've been in peril.
CYRANO: No. None. Be at ease.
LISE (*shaking her finger at him*): I think you're lying.
CYRANO: Does my nose blush, Lise?
I must have told a most enormous lie. . . . I . . .
(*Changing his manner.*) I expect some one. And if . . .
they . . . pass not by.
You will leave us quite alone.
RAGUENEAU: Alone! That chance has passed.
My rhymers come.
LISE (*ironically*): And come to break their fast.
CYRANO: Take them away, when I shall give the sign.
What time is it?
RAGUENEAU: Ten minutes past.

CYRANO (*nervously, seating himself at* RAGUENEAU'S *table, and taking a sheet of paper*): A quill.

RAGUENEAU (*offering him the one stuck above his own ear*):
Sir, honour mine!
This swan's quill.

A TROOPER (*with splendid moustaches, and very resplendent, enters and in a stentorian voice calls*): Greeting.

CYRANO (*turning and looking*): Who's that?

RAGUENEAU: Friend of my wife's. I'm told
—By him,—a famous warrior.

CYRANO (*taking the quill and dismissing* RAGUENEAU *with a gesture*): To write . . . to fold . . .
(*To himself*) To give it to her and to fly.
(*He throws down the pen*) Poltroon!
I cannot, for my life . . .
(*To* RAGUENEAU) What time is it?

RAGUENEAU: Soon
'Twill be a quarter past.

CYRANO (*striking his breast*): Speak one word of all
My heart says ceaselessly . . . Whate'er befall,
I'll write this letter, written in my heart
A hundred times already, so my part,
Putting my soul upon this paper fair,
Is but to copy what is graven there.
(*He writes. Through the glass panes in the door one sees thin, hesitating shadows.*)

SCENE IV

RAGUENEAU, LISE, *the trooper;* CYRANO, *writing at the little table; the poets, dressed in black, ungartered, stockings muddy.*

LISE (*to* RAGUENEAU): There is your crew.

FIRST POET (*entering, to* RAGUENEAU): Brother!

SECOND POET (*grasping* RAGUENEAU'S *hand*): Fellow, beyond compare!

THIRD POET: Eagle of Pastry Cooks.
(*He snuffs the air*) Your eerie's air
Is sweet.
FOURTH POET: O Phoebus Roaster!
FIFTH POET: Cook of harmonies
RAGUENEAU (*surrounded, embraced, patted on the shoulder*):
How these great men do make you feel at ease!
FIRST POET: We were retarded by the swarming crowd
About the Nesle Gate.
SECOND POET: There, without a shroud,
Eight bloody brigands on the stones below.
CYRANO (*raising his head for a moment*): Eight? I thought, seven.
RAGUENEAU: Master, do you know
The hero of this combat?
CYRANO (*indifferently*): I? No.
LISE (*to the trooper*): You?
THE TROOPER (*twirling his moustaches*): Maybe.
CYRANO (*writing, apart. From time to time one hears a murmured word*): *I love you.*
FIRST POET: One, they say,—a sight to see,—
Put all the band to flight.
SECOND POET: A strange heap lies
There on the stone,—pikes, bludgeons . . .
CYRANO (*writing*): *Your sweet eyes . . .*
THIRD POET: They have found hats clean to the dockyard slips.
FIRST POET: Gad, he must be ferocious.
CYRANO: *Your dear lips.*
FIRST POET: Giant and hero must that man appear.
CYRANO (*writing*): *Beholding you, I almost swoon with fear.*
SECOND POET (*to* RAGUENEAU, *while he snaps up a cake*):
What new rhymes have you written?
CYRANO: *How divine . . .*
(*He writes a few words more, is about to sign the letter, but checks himself, and rising, thrusts it into his doublet.*)
I'll give it her myself. What need to sign?

RAGUENEAU (*to the* SECOND POET): A recipe in verse.
THIRD POET (*installing himself near a plate of cream puffs*):
Let's hear, say I.
FOURTH POET (*looking at a tart he has taken*):
This sweet thing has her bonnet quite awry.
(*He removes it with one bite.*)
FIRST POET: This gingerbread pursues a famished lover
With almond eyes angelic eyebrows cover.
(*He breaks off a piece.*)
SECOND POET: We listen . . .
THIRD POET (*lightly pinching a cream puff*):
The puff's already touched, you see.
SECOND POET (*eating a piece of the puff-paste lyre*):
For the first time, the lyre has nourished me.
RAGUENEAU (*ready to recite, coughs, straightens his cap, strikes an attitude*): A Recipe in Verse.
SECOND POET (*nudging* FIRST POET): You breakfast?
FIRST POET (*to* SECOND POET): On your part,
You dine?
RAGUENEAU: *The Way To Make An Almond Tart.*

Stir, but do not beat, one begs,
Certain eggs.
Beat into the yelky batter
Lemons sour.
Then you pour
Sweet milk of almonds, later.

Now, puff paste lightly fold
Into a mold.
With skillful touch
Put apricots to hide
The paste inside.
Haste not too much

As custard fills each well;—
Yet, e'er they swell

Be sure the baking starts.
They troop out light and fair.
See them there,—
Lovely almond tarts.

POETS (*talking with their mouths full*): Exquisite! Oh, delicious!

A POET (*choking*): Humph.

(*They go back, eating.* CYRANO, *who has been watching them, goes to* RAGUENEAU.)

CYRANO: Lulled by thy voice,
Seest thou not how they pilfer?

RAGUENEAU (*whispering and smiling*): It's my choice.
I see but look away, to save them trouble.
And, so to say, my verses serve me double.
I have my weakness, sir. I find it sweet
To read my rhymes and let the hungry eat.

CYRANO (*clapping him on the shoulder*): Thou pleasest me.

(RAGUENEAU *goes to rejoin his friends.* CYRANO *follows him with his eyes, and then, rather sternly*): Ho, Lise.

(LISE, *in tender conversation with the trooper, starts, and comes forward to* CYRANO) This Captain here
Lays siege? . . .

LISE (*with injured dignity*): I can protect my virtue,—never fear.
My downcast eyes can lift and flash, and so . . .

CYRANO: I find your downcast eyes look somewhat low.
Your husband pleases me, so . . . mind your eyes.
Let no one wrong him, and no man despise.

LISE: But . . .

CYRANO (*who has raised his voice so the gallant can hear*):
To a wise listener. . . .

(*He salutes the trooper, and goes to watch near the door, having looked at the clock.*)

LISE: I'm surprised. Suppose

(*To the trooper, who has merely returned* CYRANO'S *salute*)
You call him! . . . Make remarks . . . about his nose.

THE TROOPER: His nose. . . . His nose . . .
(*He hastens farther off,* LISE *following.*)
CYRANO (*at the door motions to* RAGUENEAU *to take his poets away*): 'Pst . . .
RAGUENEAU (*showing the poets the door at the left*):
We shall have quiet here.
CYRANO (*impatiently*): 'Pst. . . . 'Pst . . .
RAGUENEAU: To read
Our poems.
FIRST POET (*despairingly, with his mouth full*): But the pastry?
SECOND POET: Take it along.
(*They troop after* RAGUENEAU, *having rifled the platters.*)

SCENE V

CYRANO, ROXANE, *the Duenna*

CYRANO: Indeed
I'll draw the letter out if there appear
One ray of hope.
(ROXANE, *masked, followed by the duenna, appears at the panes in the door. He hurriedly throws it open.*)
Come in! . . .
(*He marches up to the duenna*) Two words, duenna, hear.
THE DUENNA: Four.
CYRANO: Do you love eating?
DUENNA: Aye, to make me ill.
CYRANO (*hastily taking some paper bags from the counter*):
Good. Here's a sonnet. . . .
DUENNA: Huh?
CYRANO: Which I dared to fill
With cream cakes.
THE DUENNA (*her expression changing*): Oh!
CYRANO: Perhaps you haven't seen
The little cake they call an almandine?
THE DUENNA: Oh, I adore them. No word is too strong.
CYRANO: I plunge six in the bosom of a song,—

One by Saint-Amand. Chapelain's verses soon
Shall seem less heavy for this macaroon.
Do you like fruit cakes?

DUENNA: I could sit and eat
Forever . . .

CYRANO (*piling her arms with the bulging bags*):
Kindly do it, in the street.

DUENNA: But . . .

CYRANO (*pushing her out*): And don't come back, while there's a dust of flour.

(*He closes the door, and comes down toward* ROXANE, *and stops, his head bared, at a respectful distance.*)

SCENE VI

CYRANO, ROXANE, *the Duenna for an instant*

CYRANO: Blessed above its fellows be the hour,
When you remembered that I breathe,—the day
Thrice blest when from so far you came to say . . .
To say . . . ?

ROXANE: First of all,—thank you, that a man I hated
Was by your valor utterly checkmated.
'Tis he . . . a certain lord . . .

CYRANO: Of Guiche?

ROXANE: . . . Had planned
To impose as husband . . .

CYRANO: Whom he could command.
(*Bowing*) My fight becomes a worthier emprise,—
Not for my ugly nose, but your sweet eyes.

ROXANE: And then . . . I wanted . . . Oh, to tell this other
I must recall in you the almost brother
When we were playmates . . . call our childhood back.

CYRANO: You spent the summers, then, at Bergerac.

ROXANE: You fashioned swords of reeds down by the lake.

CYRANO: And corn silk gave your puppets curls to shake.

ROXANE: That was our playtime.

CYRANO: There wild berries grew.
ROXANE: And you did everything I asked you to.
CYRANO: Roxane in pinafores was Madeleine.
ROXANE: And was I pretty, then?
CYRANO: You were not plain!
ROXANE: Sometimes, in climbing, you would scratch your fingers.
Then, playing mother,—how the memory lingers,—
I'd tell you, in a voice that tried to scold
(*She takes his hand*)
"Now how did you do that? . . . A boy so old."
(*She stops, distressed*)
Oh, mercy! This is dreadful. This . . .
(*He tries to take his hand away.*)
No. Bring
It close. A great, big boy like you! A pretty thing!
Where didst thou do it?
CYRANO: At the Nesle Gate where I went to play.
ROXANE (*sitting down at a table and moistening her handkerchief in a glass of water*): Give it to me.
CYRANO (*sitting down, too*): So gentle and so gay!
ROXANE: And while I wash the blood off, tell me then
There were against you . . . ?
CYRANO: Not quite five score men.
ROXANE: Tell me!
CYRANO: Nay, let that go. Can you declare
The thing but now you dared not say . . . ?
ROXANE: But now, I dare.
(*She is still wiping the blood from his wounded hand*)
Winds from the past have given me strength to prove
My courage. . . . There is someone . . . that . . . I love.
CYRANO: Ah!
ROXANE: One who does not know it.
CYRANO: Ah!
ROXANE: Not yet.
CYRANO: Ah!
ROXANE: Who soon shall know on whom my heart is set.

CYRANO: Ah!
ROXANE: A poor boy who loves me timidly,
Humbly, . . . afar . . . and dares not speak to me.
CYRANO: Ah!
ROXANE: Leave me your hand. 'Tis fevered. But I read
The vows that trembled on his lips unsaid.
CYRANO: Ah!
ROXANE (*finishing the little bandage she has made for the wounded hand*): And . . . I must say it quick . . . lest I repent,—
He serves, my cousin, in your regiment.
CYRANO: Ah!
ROXANE (*laughing*): And is cadet in your own company.
CYRANO: Ah!
ROXANE: His brow shows genius all the world must see.
Brave, proud, young, beautiful . . .
CYRANO (*rising, deathly pale*): Beautiful?
ROXANE: You spring
Up, pale. What is it?
CYRANO: Naught. This . . . this . . .
(*He indicates his hand and smiles*) . . . this . . . pretty thing.
ROXANE: I love him. . . . But . . . I should confess, maybe,
. . . I've only seen him at the Comedy.
CYRANO: You have not talked?
ROXANE: No. . . . Only with our eyes.
CYRANO: How do you know, then . . . ?
ROXANE: Under evening skies,
Under the limes, one speaks . . . and gossips tell.
One listens, if the heart declare as well.
CYRANO: He is of the Guards?
ROXANE: He enters as cadet.
CYRANO: His name?
ROXANE: Christian, Baron of Neuvillette.
CYRANO: He isn't of the Guards.
ROXANE: Yes, since this morning.

CYRANO: 'Twill wound her heart, yet must I speak this warning.
Poor dear. . . .
THE DUENNA (*opening the door at the back*):
I ate them, Sieur of Bergerac.
CYRANO: Then read the sonnets writ upon the sack!
(*The duenna disappears.*)
CYRANO (*to* ROXANE): Poor little one,—You who devote your youth
To lovely thoughts, what if he prove uncouth?
ROXANE: He is curled like Urfe's heroes, for the world!
CYRANO: A man may be ill spoken though well curled!
ROXANE: Nay, all his words are perfect, I devine!
CYRANO: All words are fine, if the moustache be fine!
—But if he prove a dullard . . . ?
ROXANE: I shall die!
CYRANO (*after a pause*): You brought me here to tell me this?
But why? . . .
Your object, madam,—that eludes me still.
ROXANE: Oh, yesternight a chance word sent a chill
Into my soul. . . . You're all of Gascony . . .
And . . .
CYRANO: They say we try the mettle,—Ah, I see,—
Of all outsiders who, by God His grace
Find with us sons of Gascony a place.
Is it that they told you?
ROXANE: Yes. Ah, you can see
I tremble for him.
CYRANO (*between his teeth*): And not causelessly!
ROXANE: So, when so splendidly but yesternight
I saw your sword-play;—saw you put to flight
All who opposed,—I thought, If he befriend him . . .
CYRANO: Your little baron's safe. I will defend him.
ROXANE: Oh, truly? Will you be my love's defender?
Our friendship always has been strong and tender.
CYRANO: Yes, yes.
ROXANE: You'll be his friend?

CYRANO: I'll be his friend.
ROXANE: No duels?
CYRANO: I have sworn. You may depend.
ROXANE: Oh, I do love you. . . . I must take my flight.
(*She hurriedly puts on her mask, adjusts her lace scarf, and absent-mindedly*) You haven't told me of your famous fight
At the Nesle Gate. . . . Surely a time of stress . . .
—Tell him to write . . .
(*She throws him a kiss with the tips of her fingers.*)
O, I love you!
CYRANO: Yes, yes.
ROXANE: A hundred men against you? . . . Good-bye, then.
We are such friends.
CYRANO: Yes, yes!
ROXANE: Tell him! . . . A hundred men!
You'll tell me, some day. . . . Hero, to evince
Such courage. Oh, superb!
CYRANO (*saluting her*): I have done better since.
(*She goes out.* CYRANO *remains motionless, his eyes on the ground. Silence. The door on the Right opens.* RAGUENEAU *puts his head in.*)

SCENE VII

CYRANO, RAGUENEAU, *the* POETS, CARBON OF CASTEL-JALOUX, *the Cadets, the Crowd of Admirers; later, the* COUNT OF GUICHE

RAGUENEAU: May we come back?
CYRANO (*motionless*): Yes.
(RAGUENEAU *beckons and his friends the poets re-enter. At the same time, by the door at the back, appears* CARBON OF CASTEL-JALOUX *in Captain's uniform. He comes in, delighted at having found* CYRANO): Here he is!
CYRANO (*raising his head*): Captain.
CARBON (*exulting*): Ho,
Our hero! We know all! And you must go,—
Thirty cadets await you . . .

CYRANO: But . . . (*He draws back.*)
CARBON (*trying to take him*): Just across
The corner yonder.
CYRANO: No.
CARBON: At the Traitor's Cross.
CYRANO: I . . .
CARBON (*goes to the door and calls in a voice of thunder*):
Hero refuses. In the devil's own humor.
(*Tumult without. Clatter of swords and boots, coming closer.*)
CARBON (*rubbing his hands together*):
Crossing the street. Maybe you heard a rumor?
THE CADETS (*pouring into the kitchen*):
Zounds! 'Sdeath! Thousand Devils! Caputdedius!
RAGUENEAU (*shrinking back before this onslaught*):
Sirs, be ye Gascons all?
THE CADETS: Aye, all of us.
A CADET (*to* CYRANO): Bravo!
CYRANO: Baron! . . .
ANOTHER (*wringing his hand*): Vivat!
CYRANO: Baron! . . .
THIRD CADET: I must embrace . . .
CYRANO: Baron! . . .
A NUMBER OF CADETS: Let's all embrace him!
CYRANO (*not knowing to whom to speak first*):
Barons . . . give you grace.
RAGUENEAU: Sirs, are ye barons all?
THE CADETS: All.
RAGUENEAU: Each that breathes?
FIRST CADET: Could build a tower of our baronial wreaths.
LE BRET (*entering and rushing up to* CYRANO):
They seek for you,—a crowd, delirious, led
By those who saw last night the blood you shed.
CYRANO (*horrified*): You told them where to find me?
LE BRET (*rubbing his hands together contentedly*): But, indeed!

A CITIZEN (*entering, followed by a group*):
The world of fashion follows, and we lead!
(*Without, the street is filled with the fashionable world. Sedan chairs and coaches stop in front of the shop.*)
LE BRET (*low, smiling, to* CYRANO): And Roxane?
CYRANO (*tensely*): Ah, be still!
RAGUENEAU (*on a table, as a mob bursts into the pastry shop*):
Hey! My stand
Is wrecked, my molds are broken! Ain't it grand!
VARIOUS PEOPLE (*surrounding* CYRANO): My friend . . .
My friend . . . My friend . . .
CYRANO: I had not, yesterday,
So many friends.
A LITTLE MARQUIS (*running up, hands outstretched*):
If thou knewst, . . . if, I say, . . .
CYRANO: If *thou?* If *thou?* Did we herd goats together?
ANOTHER MARQUIS: I'd have you meet some ladies who . . .
CYRANO (*icily*): What other
Will first present you to me?
LE BRET (*confounded*): Thou dost ill.
What ails thee, Cyrano?
CYRANO: Ah, thou be still!
A MAN OF LETTERS (*with a writing board*):
May I have details . . . ?
CYRANO: No.
LE BRET (*nudging* CYRANO): That is Renaudot.
Inventor of the new gazette.
CYRANO: Just so.
LE BRET: The sheet that tells what all men do or hear,—
They say it has a future, that idea.
A POET (*advancing*): Sir . . .
CYRANO: More! . . .
THE POET: Your name in pentacrostic, sir. I wish
To read to . . .
ANOTHER: Sir . . .
CYRANO: Enough! . . .

(*A stir in the crowded room. The crowd ranges itself in two rows. The* COUNT OF GUICHE *appears with an escort of officers.* CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, *and the officers who went with* CYRANO *at the end of the first act.* CUIGY *comes hurriedly to* CYRANO.)

CUIGY: The Count of Guiche!

(*A murmur of excitement. Everybody makes way.*)

Marshall of Gassion bade him take occasion . . .

THE COUNT OF GUICHE (*saluting* CYRANO):

He bade me bear to you his admiration
Of the new exploit whose report has run . . .

THE CROWD: Bravo!

CYRANO (*bowing*): No better judge of courage could be won.

GUICHE: He could not have believed your enterprise,
But they who told had seen it.

CUIGY: With our eyes!

LE BRET (*aside, to* CYRANO, *whose thoughts seem far away*):
But . . .

CYRANO: Ah, be still.

LE BRET: Thou seem'st to suffer.

CYRANO (*trembling and turning quickly*): Zounds!
Before the world? Watch!

(*His moustache bristles; his chest heaves.*)

GUICHE (*to whom* CUIGY *has whispered something*):
Your career abounds
In exploits, and you serve, they tell me thus,
With these mad Gascons?

CYRANO: Yes.

A CADET (*in a huge voice*): He is one of Us.

GUICHE (*looking at the Gascons ranged behind* CYRANO):
Ha! All these gentlemen in haughty rows,
Are they the famous . . .

CARBON OF CASTEL-JALOUX: Cyrano!

CYRANO: Captain?

CARBON: I propose,—

The Company's all present, as for mount,—
Pray you, present the Gascons to the Count.

CYRANO (*taking two steps toward the* COUNT OF GUICHE *and presenting the Cadets*):

These are Gascony's darling cadets
Of Carbon of Castel-Jaloux;
Brazen braggarts, each man of them bets,
—These are Gascony's darling cadets,—
That for blasons and chevrons and frets
No kingling can rank with our crew.
These are Gascony's darling cadets
Of Carbon of Castel-Jaloux.

Stork's leg, eagle eye, none forgets,
Cat's moustache with wolf fangs showing too.
If a cur snarls, no quarter he gets.
Stork's leg, eagle eye, none forgets.
On his head an old beaver each sets,
—Plume acock though the wind whistles through!—
Stork's leg, eagle eye, none forgets,
Cat's moustache with wolf fangs showing too!

Crack-pates and slash-bellies, these pets,
No tenderer name is their due;
A glutton for glory, none lets,
—Crack-pates and slash-bellies, these pets,—
Till with blood and with battle he sweats
Wherever there's fighting to do.
—Crack-pates and slash-bellies, these pets,
No tenderer name is their due!

These are Gascony's darling cadets
Of Carbon of Castel-Jaloux.
All rivals their dominance rue,
Such love their wild wooing begets.

Every husband must shake in his shoe.
Sound the fife! Sound the drum! Sing Cuckoo!
These are Gascony's darling cadets.
Of Carbon of Castel-Jaloux!

GUICHE (*coolly, seated in an armchair which* RAGUENEAU *has hastened to fetch*): A poet is the fashion, I infer.
Will you be mine?
CYRANO: I will be no man's, sir.
GUICHE: My uncle, Richelieu, who went abroad
Last night, was entertained. 'Tis he . . .
LE BRET (*dazzled*): Good Lord!
GUICHE: You've rhymed at least five acts, I will engage?
LE BRET (*whispering*): You'll see your *Agrippina* on the stage!
GUICHE: Bring them to him . . .
CYRANO (*tempted, a little charmed*): Truly . . .
GUICHE: He is most learned.
Your lines will be corrected, newly turned . . .
CYRANO (*whose face changes instantly*):
Impossible, my lord. My blood is frozen
To think of one least comma newly chosen.
GUICHE: But if a poem please him, you shall hear
How well he pays.
CYRANO: Nay, he would pay less dear
Than I. When I have made a verse I find well made,
I sing it to myself and am repaid.
GUICHE: Sir, you are proud.
CYRANO: Sir, you are not mistaken.
A CADET (*coming in with his sword strung with hats, with plumes bedraggled, battered and broken*):
See, Cyrano, the bag of game we've taken,
Down by the wharf. The fox escaped the toils
But left his brush.
CARBON: So, to the victor, spoils.
EVERYBODY (*laughing*): Ah, ha-ha!
CUIGY: The man who hired that rabble, made that plan,
Must rage to-day.

BRISSAILLE: Is't known?
GUICHE: I am the man.
(*The laughter ceases.*)
I charged them to chastise,—one must forego it,
Though tempted, for oneself,—a drunken poet.
(*An embarrassed silence.*)
THE CADET (*whispering to* CYRANO, *showing him the hats*):
Shall we try out the lard,—or—it depends . . .
A hare-stew? . . .
CYRANO (*taking the sword on which the hats are impaled, and with a flourish and a salute letting them slide off at the feet of the* COUNT OF GUICHE):
Pray, return them to your friends.
GUICHE (*rising and calling angrily*):
My porter and my chair, at once. I wish
To ride. (To CYRANO, *violently*)
You, sir . . .
A VOICE (*in the street, calling*): Chair for my lord, the Count of Guiche.
GUICHE (*who has mastered himself, smiling*):
Have you read Don Quixote?
CYRANO: I make that claim,
And stand uncovered at the mad knight's name.
GUICHE: Then meditate upon . . .
A PORTER (*at the door*): Your chair . . .
GUICHE: Thé scene
That tells of wind-mills, sir.
CYRANO: Chapter thirteen.
GUICHE: When one attacks them, one may always find . . .
CYRANO: One has a foe that veers with every wind?
GUICHE: That wind-mills have long arms and may make scars,
Thrusting you to the mire.
CYRANO: Or to the stars!
(*The* COUNT OF GUICHE *goes out. He is seen mounting his chair. The gentlemen go out, whispering.* LE BRET *escorts them. The crowd melts away.*)

SCENE VIII

CYRANO, LE BRET, *The Cadets who have taken places at the tables on both sides of the room and are ordering food and wine.*

CYRANO (*mockingly saluting those who go out without daring to look toward him*): Gentlemen . . . Gentlemen . . .

LE BRET (*desolated, coming back to* CYRANO, *his arms uplifted to heaven*): So richly clad . . .

CYRANO: Ah, thou. Thou'rt going to scold.

LE BRET: It is so mad!
Some men woo Fortune,—you assassinate.
Exaggeration!

CYRANO: I exaggerate.

LE BRET (*triumphantly*): Ah!

CYRANO: On principle. And for a good example,
I find exaggeration none too ample.

LE BRET: Ah, leave this pose of musketeer, my friend.
Fortune and glory woo thee.

CYRANO: To what end?
—Find a great patron? Fawn on noble folk?
Cling, as the ivy twines about the oak,
And feeding on its bark, creeps up at length?
To crawl by cunning, not to rise by strength?
I thank you, no! Inscribe, as rhymster do
Verses to financiers? Crack jokes to woo
To lips of ministers a passing smile,—
Half fearing it is sinister, the while?
I thank you, no! To eat toad every day?
Crawl on your belly till it's thin? And pray,
Shall one's skin first grow dirty at the knees?
One's back grow hooped, bending with fatal ease?
I thank you, no! Sit always on the fence,
Lest this or that side give the great offense?
Howl always with the pack? Still live afeard
Swinging your censer always in some beard?
I thank you, no! Tread spindles in a coop?
Become a big man in a little group?

Paddle in ponds,—the oar a madrigal,
And spinsters' sighs to swell the sails withal?
I thank you, no! To the good Sercy go
And pay him if he publish? Thank you, no!
To be named pope by that convention's will
Whose every bishop is an imbecile?
I thank you, no!
—Strive still that none outrank you,
Not striving to perfect your work? I thank you,
No! Discover talent only where it lacks?
Be terrorized by pamphleteer attacks?
To have ambition, thus,—"If only I
Can hope for mention in the *Mercury*"?
I thank you, no! Seek still to serve the time,
And make a visit rather than a rhyme?
To frame petitions asking—anything?
I thank you, no! I thank you, no!
But, . . . sing,
Dream, laugh, and wander—be alone and free.
—A voice that vibrates; eyes that clearly see,—
To set your hat awry if so you'd don it;
For yes, or no, to fight,—or make a sonnet!
Careless of fame to do one's work, and soon
To make that long-dreamed journey to the moon!
Only to write what in your heart began.
Modest, to tell yourself, "My little man
Be satisfied with fruit, flowers, leaves or stem,
If in your garden,—yours,—you gather them."
Then if, perchance, a little triumph come,
There is no tribute to be paid at Rome.
Wrought in your soul let all your merit be.
Be not the ivy. Be yourself, the tree.
What though no oak, no linden, there is grown.
To rise,—not high, perhaps,—but rise alone!

LE BRET: Alone, but not against all. Why the devil
Have you this mania just to seem uncivil?
Make always enemies, without an end?

CYRANO: I see you make so many friends, my friend!
I tread more freely where salutes are fewer,
And a new foeman makes me feel secure.
LE BRET: What folly!
CYRANO: 'Tis my weakness. I have stated
I please to displease; love to be well hated.
One walks so freely, in such cheerful guise,
Under a fusillade of angry eyes.
I like my doublet doubly to adorn
With angry glances and with upstart's scorn.
You with your friends remind me past belief
Of one enswathed in a soft neckerchief,
Rich with Italian lace. One's head must be
At ease therein,—but held less loftily.
The brow that's not compelled and lifted high,
May lean too low; the neck may bend, awry.
For me, my Hate makes, many a time and oft,
A full starched ruff that holds my head aloft;
New enemies make fresh frills every day,
A new discomfort and an added ray,
Till, a great Spanish ruff, one sees the whole,
A band of iron,—but an aureole!
LE BRET (*after a pause, putting his arm through his friend's arm*):
Be proud and fierce to others. 'Twill not move me.
To me, say simply this: "She does not love me."
CYRANO (*sharply*): Be still!
(*A moment before,* CHRISTIAN *has entered. He mingles with the Cadets. None of them speak a word to him. At last he sits down alone at a little table, and* LISE *serves him.*)

SCENE IX

CYRANO, LE BRET, *The Cadets,* CHRISTIAN OF NEUVILLETTE

A CADET (*seated at a table, centre, back, glass in hand*):
Ho, Cyrano!
(CYRANO *turns*) Your story.
CYRANO: In good time.

(*He goes up, arm-in-arm with* LE BRET. *They talk in low tones.*)

THE CADET (*rising and coming down*):

'Twill be a lesson useful as sublime . . .

A lesson (*He stops near the table at which* CHRISTIAN *is seated*) an apprentice best learn quickly.

CHRISTIAN (*raising his head*): Apprentice?

ANOTHER: Sickly Northerner . . .

CHRISTIAN: Eh? Sickly?

FIRST CADET (*jeeringly*): My lord of Neuvillette, you shall be coached.

One subject in our ranks is never broached.

In his home who was hung let none say, "Rope."

CHRISTIAN: What mean you?

ANOTHER CADET (*in a menacing voice, laying his finger mysteriously aside of his nose*): Look. (*He repeats the gesture thrice.*) You understand, I hope.

CHRISTIAN: Oh . . . it's . . .

ANOTHER: Pst! . . . The word is never spoken.

(*He points to* CYRANO, *who is in conversation with* LE BRET.) Else, someone's sword and head alike were broken.

ANOTHER (*who, while* CHRISTIAN *talked to the others, has slipped up behind him in his place at the table*):

Two men who whined were killed as dead as Moses,

—They made him angry, talking through their noses.

ANOTHER (*in a sepulchral voice, appearing from under the table, where he has crawled on all fours*):

None makes, who lives to see a ripe old age,

The least allusion to that cartilage.

ANOTHER (*putting his hand on* CHRISTIAN'S *shoulder*):

A word . . . nay, but a gesture. 'Tis avowed

A handkerchief drawn out may prove a shroud.

(*Silence. All with folded arms sit in a circle around him, staring and saying nothing. He rises and goes to* CARBON OF CASTEL-JALOUX, *who, talking to a fellow officer, appears to have noticed none of this.*)

CHRISTIAN: Captain . . .
CARBON (*turning and surveying him from head to heels*): Sir?
CHRISTIAN: What's done, sir, if one find
Some Southerners too boastful?
CARBON: If inclined
One proves the North may have its share of glory.
(*He turns his back.*)
CHRISTIAN: I thank you.
FIRST CADET (*to* CYRANO): Thy story, now.
ALL: His story!
CYRANO (*coming down*): Ah, my story?
(*All bring their stools and group themselves around him.* CHRISTIAN *sits astride a chair.*)
Ah, well, I marched alone to the Nesle hatch.
The moon above shone like a silvern watch,
When some celestial watch-maker, with care,
Wrapped it in fleecy cloths, and left me there,
Its silver case thus wholly hid from sight,
In the black darkness of a moonless night.
The wharves unlighted stood in pitchy rows.
'Sdeath, one couldn't see beyond
CHRISTIAN: His nose.
(*Silence. Every one gets up slowly. They look at* CYRANO, *aghast. He has stopped, transfixed. A pause.*)
CYRANO: Who is that fellow?
A CADET (*in a choking whisper*): He is one who came
This morning.
CYRANO (*taking a step toward* CHRISTIAN): This morning?
FIRST CADET (*to* CYRANO): Thy story, now.
Is Baron of Neuvil . . .
CYRANO (*suddenly restraining himself*): Ah, very well . . .
(*He turns pale, then red, starts to hurl himself upon* CHRISTIAN, *then masters himself, and in a toneless voice*):
I mean . . .
(*He takes up his story*) As I was saying . . .
(*In a suddenly fierce voice*) 'Sdeath! . . .

(*Then in an ordinary voice*) Nothing could be seen.
(*Stupefaction. They all sit down, furtively looking at one another.*) I marched on, thinking, "For a worthless wight
I have offended some great prince or knight
Who will surely have me . . .

CHRISTIAN: By the nose.

(*Everybody starts up.* CHRISTIAN *balances himself on his chair.*)

CYRANO (*in a strangled voice*): Between his teeth, . . .
Have me between his teeth. . . . that so, beneath
That clouded moon, I'd thrust . . .

CHRISTIAN: Your nose.

CYRANO: My fingers . . . 'twixt the bark and tree.
That great one well may crush a man like me . . .
At least might pinch

CHRISTIAN: Your nose.

CYRANO (*wiping the sweat from his forehead*): My prying fingers.
But added, "Forward! For no Gascon lingers
When duty calls. Forward Cyrano goes!"
When from the shadow someone

CHRISTIAN: Punched your nose.

CYRANO: I parried,—found myself set . . .

CHRISTIAN: Nose to nose . . .

CYRANO (*making a bound toward him*): 'Odsbody!
(*All the Gascons crowd forward to see. At* CHRISTIAN'S *side,* CYRANO *checks himself, and takes up his story*):
. . . On by five score drunken foes,
Who stank . . .

CHRISTIAN: A nosefull.

CYRANO (*white and smiling*): Garlic and litharge.
I hurled myself . . .

CHRISTIAN: Nose to the wind.

CYRANO: I charge!
I ripped two open,—put a third to rout;
One lunged. I parried. Paf.

CHRISTIAN: Pif! On the snout.

CYRANO (*leaping up*): Now, thunder! Clear the room.
(*All the Cadets rush pell-mell for the doors.*)
FIRST CADET: The tiger wakes!
SECOND CADET: We'll find mincemeat.
RAGUENEAU: Huh?
ANOTHER CADET: For your smallest pie.
RAGUENEAU: I'm white and crumpled as a napkin,—aye.
And not as starchy.
CARBON: Everybody come.
ANOTHER: He isn't going to leave the smallest crumb.
ANOTHER: I'll die of fright. Hey! Help! Somebody brace me!
ANOTHER (*closing the door on the right*):
There'll be a scene of horror.
(*They all go out, by the door at the back or the one on the right. Some have disappeared by the stairway.* CYRANO *and* CHRISTIAN *stand face to face and look at each other for a moment.*)

SCENE X

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN

CYRANO: My boy, embrace me.
CHRISTIAN: Sir . . .
CYRANO: Brave.
CHRISTIAN: Ah, that! But . . .
CYRANO: Brave beyond another.
CHRISTIAN: You speak thus?
CYRANO: Boy, embrace me. I am her brother.
CHRISTIAN: Whose?
CYRANO: But . . . hers!
CHRISTIAN: Hers?
CYRANO: Roxane's.
CHRISTIAN (*running to him*): In Heaven's name!
Her brother?
CYRANO: Fraternal cousin,—just the same.
CHRISTIAN: She told you . . . ?
CYRANO: All.

CHRISTIAN: She loves me?
CYRANO: As I show you.
CHRISTIAN (*seizing his hand*): O, Sir . . . O, Sir . . . I'm very glad to know you!
CYRANO: A sudden sentiment.
CHRISTIAN: Sir . . . I am full
Of shame.
CYRANO (*looking at him and putting his hand on his shoulder*):
'Tis true. The rascal's beautiful.
CHRISTIAN: Sir, I admire you, oh, so much. . . . Good lack!
CYRANO: But all those noses?
CHRISTIAN: Oh, I take them back!
CYRANO: Roxane awaits a letter.
CHRISTIAN: Lackaday!
CYRANO: How now?
CHRISTIAN: I am undone if I must frame my vow.
I am such a dullard that I die of shame.
CYRANO: Thou didst attack me with right good acclaim.
He was no fool that made that sharp attack.
CHRISTIAN: Bah! When a man can fight, words do not lack.
With men and soldiers, facile words may come.
With ladies I am ever dull and dumb.
Oh, when I pass their eyes are always kind . . .
CYRANO: And if you tarry, gentler hearts you find?
CHRISTIAN: Nay, for I am of those,—I know and grieve,—
Who cannot speak of love.
CYRANO: 'Faith, I believe
If heavenly powers had modelled me more fit,
I am of those who well could speak of it.
CHRISTIAN: Oh, to be one whose words have wit and grace!
CYRANO: To win soft glances for a comely face!
CHRISTIAN: Roxane is Euphuistic, wise and fine.
She will be disillusioned.
CYRANO: Were it mine
On such a subject freely to expend it . . .
CHRISTIAN: I lack but eloquence.

CYRANO (*abruptly*): And I will lend it!
Thou wilt supply the beauty: by this chance,
We'll make, we two, a hero of romance!
CHRISTIAN: What?
CYRANO: Canst thou learn by heart in verse or prose
What every day I'll teach?
CHRISTIAN: Dost thou propose . . .
CYRANO: That nothing ever disappoint Roxane!
Consent that we together try this plan.
Wilt thou feel pass from my buff doublet's fold
To thy gay doublet all my heart may hold?
CHRISTIAN: But Cyrano . . .
CYRANO: Choose, Christian!
CHRISTIAN: Oh, I fear!
CYRANO: Thou fearest, left alone, to chill thy dear.
Wilt thou,—Ah, soon to win her sweet embraces,—
That we collaborate,—thy lips, my phrases?
CHRISTIAN: Thine eyes burn . . .
CYRANO: Wilt thou?
CHRISTIAN: Can a man refuse thee?
'Twould give thee pleasure?
CYRANO (*fervently*): It . . . would . . .
(*Recalling himself and speaking as an artist*):
would amuse me!
'Tis an experiment in artistry.
Wilt thou complete, me,—I fulfilling thee?
Thou'lt walk and in the shadow I will press:
I'll be thy wit, and thou, my comeliness.
CHRISTIAN: But, oh, the letter! Would she find it better,
Fair spoken words, ill-written?
CYRANO (*taking from his doublet the letter he has written*):
Here's thy letter.
CHRISTIAN: What's this?
CYRANO: It only waits to be addressed.
CHRISTIAN: I . . .

CYRANO: Send it. Send it. Put thy mind at rest.
'Tis a good letter.
CHRISTIAN: You have had? . . .
CYRANO: We have—no poet waits
Till Chloris comes—in pouches and in pates,
Love letters. Poets' sweethearts are but gleams.
We blow soap bubbles for a maid o' dreams.
Take it, and change my dream to verity.
Tossed at a venture, idle vows and free,
Thou'lt find a nest for all these errant birds.
Thou'lt see,—nay, take the letter,—all my words
—Take it,—are eloquent, as insincere.
Take it and let's ha' done!
CHRISTIAN: But to appear
'Twas writ for her . . . some changes might improve . . .
Will it fit Roxane?
CYRANO: 'Twill fit her like a glove!
CHRISTIAN: But . . .
CYRANO: Self love is credulous. Make no demur.
Roxane will think the letter writ for her.
CHRISTIAN (*throwing himself into* CYRANO'S *arms*): Ah, my friend! (*They embrace.*)

SCENE XI

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN, *The Gascons, The Trooper,* LISE

A CADET (*opening the door a crack*):
No sound. All still as death. The latch I'll clutch . . .
I dare not look. (*He pokes his head in.*) Hein?
ALL THE CADETS (*entering and seeing* CYRANO *and* CHRISTIAN *locked in an embrace*): Ah . . . Oh . . . Oh!
A CADET: This is too much.
THE TROOPER: Ah-ah!
CARBON: Our demon meek as any saint-apostle?
Smite him on one, he turns the other nostril?

THE TROOPER: Now one can talk about his nose, surmising
His spirit broken?
(*Calling to* LISE, *with a swaggering air*): Watch me!
(*He sniffs the air, affectedly*): How surprising . . .
This smell of spice.
(*He goes up to* CYRANO.) You smelt it, sir, you said—
This spicy smell? What is it?
CYRANO (*buffeting him*): It's clove head!
(*Joy. The Cadets have found the lost* CYRANO. They *turn handsprings.*

(*Curtain*)

ACT III

Roxane's Kiss

A little square in the old Marais. Old houses; a glimpse of narrow streets. Right, Roxane's *home and the wall of her garden, tall shrubbery reaching above it. Above the door, a balcony and a window. Beside the door, a bench.*

Ivy clings to the walls; jessamine engarlands the balcony and cascades from its railing.

With the aid of the bench and the jutting stones of the wall, one can easily climb to the balcony.

Opposite, an old house of the same style, brick and stone, with a massive entrance door. The knocker is swathed in linen, like a sore thumb.

When the curtain rises, the duenna is discovered, sitting on the bench. Above, the window on Roxane's *balcony is open. Near the duenna stands* Ragueneau, *dressed in livery of a sort. He is finishing a story, wiping his eyes the while.*

SCENE I

Ragueneau, *the Duenna; later,* Roxane, Cyrano, *and two pages*

Ragueneau: She left me,—for a trooper. Life was worth
Nothing. I hung myself. I quit the earth.
My lord Cyrano found me so . . . dependent,
And got this place for me as superintendent
To his fair cousin.

The Duenna: But what wrought this ruin?

Ragueneau: Soldiers and poets were the shop's undoin'!
Mars ate some cakes; Apollo cleared the plate;
You understand . . . there wasn't long to wait!

THE DUENNA (*rising and calling toward the open window*):
Ready, Roxane? They wait us! Haste, I pray!
ROXANE'S VOICE (*through the window*): I don my cape.
THE DUENNA (*to* RAGUENEAU, *indicating the door across the street*):
In Clomire's chaste retreat, across the way.
We pore upon the Realm of Tenderness.
RAGUENEAU: The Realm of Tender . . .
THE DUENNA: Of Pure Passion, yes.
(*Calling once more.*)
Roxane, make haste! To dally in this fashion
May cost the Discourse on the Tender Passion.
VOICE OF ROXANE: Coming!
(*One hears the strumming of stringed instruments drawing near.*)
VOICE OF CYRANO (*singing, in the wings*): La, la, la, la!
THE DUENNA (*surprised*): They're singing for our favour.
CYRANO (*followed by two pages who carry archlutes*):
You three-fold fool, 'tis demi-semi-quaver!
FIRST PAGE (*sarcastically*): You know then, sir, the quavers and the scruples?
CYRANO: Music I know, like all Gassendi's pupils.
THE PAGE (*playing and singing*): La, la!
CYRANO (*snatching the lute and taking up the measure*):
Enough. 'Tis I who will repeat.
La, la, la, la!
ROXANE (*appearing on the balcony*): You?
CYRANO (*singing, to the air already begun*): I, who come to greet
Your lilies and to bow before your ro . . . ses!
ROXANE: I'm coming down. (*She leaves the balcony.*)
DUENNA: Who are these virtuosos?
CYRANO: They are a wager won from Assoucy.
—A point of grammar. "I'll engage," quoth he,—
Suddenly pointing to these lanky brutes,
Who twang by trade their torture-proof archlutes,
His escort, always,—"one whole day of song."

He lost. So at my heels these two belong
Till Phoebus takes anew his golden round.
Charming at first, it palls, as I have found.
(*To the Musicians*) Hep! Go and play for me a grave pavane
For Montfleury.
(*To the Duenna*) I come to ask Roxane,
As every evening. . . .
(*To the Pages, as they go out*) Long . . . and off the key!
(*To the Duenna*) If her beloved is all she'd have him be?

ROXANE (*coming out of the house*):
Beautiful, gifted,—Oh, how I adore him!

CYRANO (*smiling*): Gifted . . . and wise? . . .

ROXANE: Even you come not before him!

CYRANO: Oh, I admit . . .

ROXANE: No tongue so skilled to bring
The pretty nothings that are everything.
Sometimes he hesitates, his muse has flown,
Then lovely phrases for the lapse atone.

CYRANO (*incredulous*): No!

ROXANE: You men are all alike! He must be dull,
So you all say, being so beautiful!

CYRANO: In facile fashion then the rascal prates?

ROXANE: Prates, quotha? Talks? My cousin, he orates!

CYRANO: He writes?

ROXANE: Ever better. Hear this line:
(*Declaiming*) *"The more thou takest my heart, the more 'tis mine."*
(*Triumphantly, to* CYRANO) Ah, well? . . .

CYRANO: Pshaw!

ROXANE: This one: *"Since I must have a heart to yearn for thee,*
And thou hast mine, give thou thine own to me."

CYRANO: Always too much, or not enough. 'Tis curious.
Just what lacks he, in hearts?

ROXANE: You make me furious!
'Tis jealousy.
CYRANO (*trembling*): Hein?
ROXANE: Author's jealousy.
This one:—Could anything more perfect be?—
"My heart before you is one longing cry.
Ah, since my kisses in my letters lie,
Read, Lady, with thy lips thy lover's letters."
CYRANO (*smiling with satisfaction in spite of himself*):
Aha, those lines . . .
(*Recollecting, disdainfully*) Alliterative fetters!
ROXANE: And this . . .
CYRANO (*entranced*): You know these missives, then, by heart?
ROXANE: All.
CYRANO: I am dumb. You flatter well his art.
ROXANE: He is a master.
CYRANO (*modestly*): Oh, a . . .
ROXANE (*peremptorily*): A master.
CYRANO: So be it,—master.
THE DUENNA (*who has gone back, coming forward hurriedly*):
The Count of Guiche!
(*To* CYRANO, *pushing him toward the house*) Go inside.
Oh, go faster.
He must not find you here. 'Twould be a clew . . .
He would guess . . .
ROXANE: . . . My secret, now so safe with you.
He loves me! He has power! He must not know!
He might destroy my hopes with one fierce blow!
CYRANO (*going into the house*): Well, well, well!
(*The* COUNT OF GUICHE *appears.*)

SCENE II

ROXANE, *The* COUNT OF GUICHE; *at a little distance, the* DUENNA

ROXANE (*to the* COUNT, *making a reverence*): I am going out.

GUICHE: I come to say good-bye.
ROXANE: You go away?
GUICHE: To war.
ROXANE: Ah!
GUICHE: This night.
ROXANE: Ah!
GUICHE: I
Have orders. Siege of Arras.
ROXANE: Is it so?
GUICHE: Aye, and this parting leaves you cold as snow.
ROXANE: Oh . . .
GUICHE: And me, heart-broken. When shall we two meet?
I am made commander.
ROXANE (*indifferent*): Bravo!
GUICHE: I repeat,
Commander of the Guards.
ROXANE (*arrested*): The Guards?
GUICHE: Where serves
Your braggart cousin who so well deserves
The vengeance I shall know how to take.
ROXANE (*suffocating*): You meant
The Guards would go?
GUICHE (*laughing*): One takes one's regiment.
ROXANE (*sinking down on the bench; aside*): Christian!
GUICHE: What troubles you?
ROXANE (*shaken*): To go . . . so far!
To . . . care . . . and have the dear one go to war!
GUICHE (*surprised and charmed*):
For the first time you whisper words so kind,—
—And I must leave you!
ROXANE (*her tone changes, she toys with her fan*):
You . . . you have in mind
Revenge . . . ?
GUICHE (*smiling*): You take your cousin's part?
ROXANE: Nay, I oppose.
GUICHE: You see him?

ROXANE: Rarely.
GUICHE: Everywhere one goes,
One sees him with
(*He tries to recall the name*)
This Neuviller . . . villain . . .
ROXANE: Tall?
GUICHE: Blonde.
ROXANE: Red . . .
GUICHE: Handsome . . .
ROXANE: Tut!
GUICHE: But dull.
ROXANE: That's plain . . .
(*Changing her tone*)
Your vengeance 'gainst Cyrano. You had thought
To set him in the forefront? That were naught,
He who loves fighting. Find a fitter plan.
GUICHE: How?
ROXANE: Take the Regiment, and leave this man
With his cadets, throughout the livelong war,
Arms folded, here in Paris. Better far,
Because more subtle, crueller, and stranger,
To punish him, deprive him, Sir, of danger!
GUICHE: O, woman, woman! Cruel, aye, and droll.
A woman's trick.
ROXANE: He would eat out his soul.
His friends would gnaw their fingers. Yes, and you
Would be avenged!
GUICHE (*drawing closer*): You care, then? Is it true?
You espouse my cause. Roxane, I wish to prove
It is for love . . .
ROXANE: It is . . . it is . . . for love.
GUICHE (*showing some sealed papers*):
I have the orders here, to be transmitted
Without delay. But one shall be omitted.
(*He detaches one.*) This . . . this of the Cadets.
(*He puts it in his pocket.*) I'll keep it safe.

Ah, how the boaster, Cyrano, will chafe!
You play such pranks, even you?
ROXANE: Sometimes one falls,
Being tempted!
GUICHE: I am mad! My duty calls,—
But—go when you are yielding?—Listen well . . .
Hard by, the good Capuchin brothers dwell;
Fra Athanasius is the Abbot. There,
No layman is admitted. Yet I'll swear
They'll find a way to hide me in their sleeves.
They have not quite forgotten, one believes,
One is nephew of one's uncle at the least,—
And Richelieu's shadow may affright a priest.
They'll think me gone. Masked, I will come. Ah, pray,
Lady Caprice, let me but wait one day!
ROXANE: If it leaked out! . . . Your glory. . . .
GUICHE: Pah!
ROXANE: Your vow!
The siege!
GUICHE: Forgot! Pray you . . .
ROXANE: No, no!
GUICHE: Pray . . . thou!
ROXANE (*tenderly*): I must forbid!
GUICHE: Ah!
ROXANE: Go!
(*Aside*) And Christian stays with me.
(*Aloud*) I bid you be my hero . . . Anthony!
GUICHE: Celestial sound! Then you love him . . .
ROXANE: For whom I fear!
GUICHE (*transported, kisses her hand*): I go! . . .
Are you content?
ROXANE: Oh, yes . . . my dear!
(*He goes out.*)
THE DUENNA (*curtseying derisively, behind his back*):
Oh, yes, my dear!

ROXANE (to the DUENNA): 'Sh! Not a word. He would owe
me much despite.
I have robbed Cyrano of a chance to fight.
(*She calls toward the house*): Cousin!

SCENE III

ROXANE, *the* DUENNA, CYRANO

ROXANE: They wait us at Clomire's. We must not linger.
Alcandre speaks and . . .
THE DUENNA (*putting her finger in her ear*):
And my little finger
Says we will miss it.
CYRANO: Do not miss those . . . apes.
THE DUENNA (*entranced*):
Behold the knocker, which fair linen drapes.
(*To the knocker.*)
One sees you shrouded lest your careless clamor
Trouble sweet discourse with its brazen hammer.
(*She lifts it with infinite precaution and knocks softly.*)
ROXANE (*seeing the door is opened*): Let us go in.
(*On the threshold, to* CYRANO): If Christian come, of course
I know that he will wait.
CYRANO (*hurriedly, as she is disappearing*):
Ah . . . (*She turns.*) His discourse.
As is your wont, you'll question him . . . ?
ROXANE: About . . .
CYRANO (*eagerly*): About? . . .
ROXANE: Cyrano, you'll be dumb?
CYRANO: How can you doubt?
ROXANE: Then . . . about nothing. "Take free rein," I'll cry.
"Improvise! Speak of love! Be splendid! Fly!"
CYRANO (*smiling*): Good.
ROXANE: 'Sh!
CYRANO: Whist!

ROXANE: Not a word.

(*She enters, and the door is closed.*)

CYRANO (*bowing low, as soon as the door is safely shut*):

Thank you.

(*The door opens, and* ROXANE *puts her head out.*)

ROXANE: Be dumb,

Lest he prepare!

CYRANO: The devil! Never!

THE TWO (*speaking at once*): 'Sh!

(*The door is shut.*)

CYRANO (*calling softly*): Ho, Christian! Come!

SCENE IV

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN

CYRANO: Prepare thy memory to grave the story.
This is the night to win immortal glory.
Don't look so glum. I know the theme. Let's go,—
Quick! to thy quarters. Let me teach thee.

CHRISTIAN: No!

CYRANO: Hein?

CHRISTIAN: Here I'll wait Roxane.

CYRANO: What's this dismay?—
What madness? Come, prepare!

CHRISTIAN: I won't, I say!
I'm tired of borrowing every word and thought,
Playing a rôle and fearing to be caught.
'Twas well at first. I know she loves me now.
I fear no more. I'll be myself, I vow.

CYRANO: Ah—well—now!

CHRISTIAN: Who said I could not speak?
Thou'lt see, my friend, my wit is not so weak.
Thy lessons helped. Now, I know how to tell
My story. . . . And by all the devils of hell,
The way to take her in my arms I know!

(*Seeing* ROXANE, *who comes out of* CLOMIRE'S *house.*)
She's coming! Oh, don't leave me, Cyrano!
CYRANO (*bowing low*): Speak for yourself, Sir.
(*He disappears behind the garden wall.*)

SCENE V

CHRISTIAN, ROXANE; *for a moment, the* DUENNA

ROXANE (*coming out of* CLOMIRE'S *house with a fashionable group; there are leave-takings, curtseys, farewells*):
Barthenoïde! Gremione!
THE DUENNA (*disconsolate*): We missed the Discourse. Ah, I might have known!
ROXANE (*still saluting the Euphuists*): Urimedonte. Farewell.
(*All, bowing to* ROXANE, *curtseying, saluting one another, go off by different streets.* ROXANE *sees* CHRISTIAN.)
ROXANE: You came!
(*She goes toward him.*) The night is sweet.
Wait. . . . They have gone . . . No footfall in the street. . . .
Let us sit here. Speak. I will hear . . . and dream.
CHRISTIAN (*sits down near her on the bench. A silence, then*):
I love you.
ROXANE (*closing her eyes*): Speak of love.
CHRISTIAN: I love thee.
ROXANE: 'Tis the theme.
Gild it!
CHRISTIAN: I . . .
ROXANE: Broider it!
CHRISTIAN: I love thee *so.*
ROXANE: Doubtless. And then . . .
CHRISTIAN: And then I want to know
If you love me. Tell me, Roxane.
ROXANE (*pouting*): You seem
To give me gruel, when I hoped for cream.
Tell me a little *how* you love me.

CHRISTIAN: Much.
ROXANE: Elaborate your love!
CHRISTIAN: I want to touch . . .
To kiss . . . thy neck.
ROXANE: Christian!
CHRISTIAN: I love . . .
ROXANE (*trying to rise*): Once more!
CHRISTIAN (*eagerly, restraining her*): Nay, I don't love . . .
ROXANE (*sitting down again*): That is better.
CHRISTIAN: I adore!
ROXANE (*rising and moving away*): Oh!
CHRISTIAN: I grow dull.
ROXANE: And win my just disdain.
'Twould please me hardly less had you grown plain.
CHRISTIAN: But . . .
ROXANE (*severely*): Rally the eloquence so put to flight.
CHRISTIAN: I . . .
ROXANE: I know, you love me. Go!
(*She goes toward the house.*)
CHRISTIAN: Don't quit my sight!
I want to say . . .
ROXANE (*her hand on the latch*): That you adore me? Yes.
Leave me!
CHRISTIAN: But I . . .
(*She goes in and shuts the door in his face.*)
CYRANO (*who has come back and stands for a moment unseen*):
A most pronounced success.

SCENE VI

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN; *a moment, the Pages*

CHRISTIAN: Succor me!
CYRANO: No.
CHRISTIAN: I die, lest I reclaim
Her favour, instantly.
CYRANO: I' the devil's name,
How shall I teach you, instantly?

CHRISTIAN (*seizing his arm*): Look, Cyrano!
(*A light shines out from* ROXANE'S *chamber.*)
CYRANO (*moved*): Her window!
CHRISTIAN: I shall die.
CYRANO: You fool, speak low.
CHRISTIAN (*whispering*): Shall die! . . .
CYRANO: The night is dark.
CHRISTIAN: Well, what?
CYRANO: 'Tis not too late.
Stand there, you ass, though you deserve your fate,
There, by the balcony. I'll hide beneath,
And whisper thee thy words.
CHRISTIAN: But . . .
CYRANO: Save thy breath!
THE PAGES (*reappearing, present themselves to* CYRANO): Hep!
CYRANO: Whist!
(*He signs to them to speak softly.*)
FIRST PAGE (*whispering*): My lord, we gave the serenade
To Montfleury.
CYRANO (*hurriedly and low*): Now, lie in ambuscade,
One at this corner; one on t'other stay;
And if a stroller chance to pass this way,
Play me an air.
SECOND PAGE: What air, Sir Gassendist?
CYRANO: Sad, for a man; gay, for a lady.
(*The Pages vanish, each taking his station at the corner of the street.*)
CYRANO (*to* CHRISTIAN): Whist!
Call her.
CHRISTIAN: Roxane!
CYRANO (*gathering a handful of pebbles which he tosses against the window*): Wait. These are what we need.
ROXANE (*half opening her window*): Who called me?
CHRISTIAN: I.
ROXANE: Who is I?
CHRISTIAN: Christian.

ROXANE (*disdainfully*): Indeed?
CHRISTIAN: I must speak to you.
CYRANO (*under the balcony, to* CHRISTIAN):
Whisper, man. Speak low.
ROXANE: Nay, you speak stupidly. I bid you go.
CHRISTIAN: Pray hear . . .
ROXANE: You love no more.
CHRISTIAN (*to whom* CYRANO *whispers the words*):
No more,—just heaven!—
I who love always more!
ROXANE (*who, going to close the window, pauses*):
He is half forgiven.
CHRISTIAN (*still repeating the words with which* CYRANO *supplies him*): Love sways my soul. Always new tremors start.
The imp has made a cradle of my heart.
ROXANE (*coming out on the balcony*):
Since Love is cruel, you, if you are wise,
Will kill him in this cradle where he lies.
CHRISTIAN (*same business*):
Nay, I have striven, but, Lady, an' it please,
This new-born infant is a Hercules.
ROXANE: That's better.
CHRISTIAN (*same business*): With ease he strangles,—it is truth I tell,—
The serpents, Pride and Doubt.
ROXANE: Nay, this is *well.*
(*She leans on the balcony railing.*)
Why do you hesitate? Begin, and stop?
Your spring of fancy trickles, drop by drop.
CYRANO (*drawing* CHRISTIAN *under the balcony and slipping into his place*): 'Sh! This becomes too hard. . . .
ROXANE: What is your plight?
Your words come slowly. Why?
CYRANO (*speaking in a whisper, as* CHRISTIAN *has done*):
Because 'tis night.
Groping in shadow, they must seek your ear.

ROXANE: Mine do not stumble, yet you seem to hear.
CYRANO: They find their place at once, because they rest,
Where I receive them always, in my breast.
My heart is large. Your ear is very small.
Beside, your words descend. They quickly fall,—
But mine must mount, my Lady. That is slow.
ROXANE: They climbed not half so well, a while ago.
CYRANO: In these gymnastics, they have gained some skill.
ROXANE: My voice falls from a height.
CYRANO: A height to kill
A listening lover if, thus set apart,
You let a harsh word fall upon his heart.
ROXANE (*moving*): I am coming down.
CYRANO (*earnestly*): No.
ROXANE (*showing the bench beneath the balcony*):
Climb on the settle, then.
CYRANO (*starting back, trembling, in the darkness*): No.
ROXANE: How . . . No?
CYRANO (*more and more carried away by emotion*):
Oh, let me have it,—sweet beyond thy ken,—
This hour when I may speak the truth I ween,—
Pour out my pent-up love, unseen.
ROXANE: Unseen?
CYRANO: Yes. It is heaven. Dimly one devines.
You see my mantle but as shadowy lines.
I see your summer gown, a gleam of white.
I am a shadow. You are living light.
You know not what it means to me, this hour.
Have I been eloquent?
ROXANE: You had that dower!
CYRANO: My speech has never flowed, as now it flows
From my full heart.
ROXANE: Why?
CYRANO: Why? I must oppose
My words against a peril.
ROXANE: What?

CYRANO: The dizziness
Of those who look in your deep eyes. I bless
This darkness whence I speak to you alone
For the first time!
ROXANE: And with a strange, new tone.
CYRANO (*coming nearer, passionately*):
A new tone? Yes. For in the dark delaying,
I dare to be myself.
(*He stops and with bewilderment.*) What am I saying?
I do not know. Forgive! To speak to you
Is so delicious, and for me so new.
ROXANE: So new?
CYRANO (*overwhelmed, trying to recapture his words*):
So new . . . but yes! To be sincere,
Not fearing mockery,—that damned fear!
ROXANE: Mockery?
CYRANO: Yes, for my heart's leaping flame.
I clothed myself in robes of wit, for shame.
I reach, to touch the stars, but, 'neath the power
Of mockery, I stoop,—and pluck a flower!
ROXANE: Flowers in the grass, and flowers of speech, are sweet.
CYRANO: To-night, we will trample both beneath our feet.
Quivers and arrows, links, and such like toys
We'll toss them to the winds of fresher joys
Dull is the water—though the deed be nimble,—
Drunk, softly sipping, from a lady's thimble.
Ah, let the soul be free, speed on its course,
And quench its craving at the fountain's source!
ROXANE: Your intellect . . .
CYRANO: Found favour in your sight
In the beginning. 'Twould affront this night,—
This hour, these perfumes, Nature's very self!—
To prate like pretty books from Voiture's shelf
—Ah, let the sky with its clear star-bright eyes
Shine in our hearts, rid them of all disguise.
I fear lest euphuistic alchemists

Let all true sentiment be lost in mists;
Lest in its crucible, the dross should shine,—
And fining leave the fine less fine, in fine!

ROXANE: But intellect . . .

CYRANO: In love it is a crime!
Fencing and parrying with things sublime!
The moment comes,—inevitably comes,—
Woe to the heart that never thus succumbs!—
When in the soul a flame so pure arises
That every well-turned phrase the heart despises.

ROXANE: Ah, well, if that time come to us, disclose
What words you would have for me.

CYRANO: All those, all those, all those
That come to me, I'll toss them at your feet,—
Not bind them in a nosegay! O, my sweet,
I suffocate! I love thee, Ah, so well!
Thy name at my heart's gate is like a bell,
And all the time, Roxane, as that heart beats,
That swaying bell thy lovely name repeats.
Dear, I remember all you do or say.
A year ago, one morn, the twelfth of May,
You changed the way you dress your shining hair.
Its blondness makes the day I see it fair.
One who has faced the sun with fearless gaze
Sees everywhere the orb's vermillion rays,—
So, when I see thy hair, agleam and curled,
A golden blur bedazzles all my world!

ROXANE (*in a troubled voice*):
Yes, this is truly love.

CYRANO: Certes, this feeling,
Jealous and terrible and all-revealing
Is love. It has the sadness and the might
Of love. Yet selfless. Self drops out of sight.
For thy least good I would give all my own;—
Aye, though thou knewst it not,—content alone
If some day, from afar, I heard arise

Thy lovely laughter from my sacrifice.
Thy glances fire me holier heights to win,
New valor, higher truths. Dost thou begin
To comprehend my love? Ah, canst thou mark
How my soul reaches . . . reaches . . . through the dark?
Truly this evening is too fair, too sweet!
I speak, you listen, and our spirits meet.
It is too much. My hopes leapt not so high,—
Not in my maddest moments. Let me die!
My life is perfected! My spoken word
Has made you tremble like a swaying bird
Among the boughs,—a leaf among the leaves.
For thou dost tremble! Lo, my heart perceives
The trembling of thy white hand on the vine.
The jasmine bears it. See, it reaches mine!
(*He kisses passionately the tips of one of the swaying sprays of jasmine.*)

ROXANE: I tremble, yes, and weep, and catch my breath,
And love thee, and am thine.

CYRANO: Then, come, sweet death!
This pure intoxication,—I wrought this!
I ask but one thing more of life . . .

CHRISTIAN (*under the balcony*): A kiss!

ROXANE (*retreating*): What?

CYRANO: Oh!

ROXANE: You ask . . .

CYRANO: Yes, I . . .
(*To* CHRISTIAN) Thou goest too fast.

CHRISTIAN: She is moved. I'll profit while the mood shall last.

CYRANO (*to* ROXANE): Yes, . . . I . . . I . . . plead . . . because you seemed so gracious.
God knows, I know I have been too audacious.

ROXANE (*a little chilled*): Then you do not insist?

CYRANO: Yea, I insist,
Insisting not. . . . Your shyness would resist . . .
And yet . . . this kiss. . . . Refuse, refuse it, dear!

CHRISTIAN (*to* CYRANO, *twitching his cloak*): Why? Why?
CYRANO (*to* CHRISTIAN): Thou, be still, Christian.
ROXANE (*leaning from her balcony*): What? I cannot hear.
CYRANO: I rate myself, for that I was too bold.
I tell myself, "Christian, be still."
(*The archlutes sound.*) Hark! Hold!
Somebody comes.
(ROXANE *shuts the window.* CYRANO *listens to the archlutes, one playing a merry measure, the other a dirge.*)
CYRANO: A dance? A dirge? What do the knaves desire
To say? A man? A woman? . . . Oh, . . . A friar!
(*Enter a Capuchin brother who goes from house to house, lantern in hand.*)

SCENE VII

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN, *a Capuchin Friar*

CYRANO (*to the monk*): Whom have we here, playing Diogenes?
THE FRIAR: I seek the home of . . .
CHRISTIAN: He makes us ill at ease.
THE FRIAR: Of Magdeleine Robin.
CHRISTIAN: Huh?
CYRANO: Here she does not dwell,—
Ahead . . . keep straight ahead.
THE FRIAR: Thank you. And I will tell
My chaplet for you, to the final Pater.
CYRANO: Good luck. And blessings on your cowl, kind frater.
(*He comes down, near* CHRISTIAN.)

SCENE VIII

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN

CHRISTIAN: Get me that kiss!
CYRANO: No.
CHRISTIAN: Soon or late . . .

CYRANO: 'Tis true!
That maddening, perfect draught will brim for you.
Your lips will meet. Strange cause two souls to link,—
Thou hast a blond mustache; her lips are pink.
And I prefer that it should be for . . .

SCENE IX

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN, ROXANE

ROXANE (*coming out on the balcony*): You?
We spoke of . . . of . . . a . . .
CYRANO: Of a kiss? 'Tis true.
I see,—but see not why,—your voice should tremble.
If the word burn, what will itself resemble?
'Tis not a thing your maiden thoughts should flee.
Have you not sometimes, half insensibly,
Quitted a jesting mood, yet free from fears,
Changed from a smile to sighs, from sighs to tears?
A change as gentle and more sweet is this,—
From tears and tremblings, to a lover's kiss.
ROXANE: Ah, hush!
CYRANO: A kiss, what is it, after all?
Promise more perfect, vows that closer fall.
A troth deep plighted seeking form to prove;—
A rosy o writ in the verb to love;
Whispers for lips, not ears; infinity
Set to the harping of a honey bee.
A chalice like the dew-drop in a flower.
Hearts learn to breathe; Love gives them this new power.
And rising to the lips, the soul can drink.
ROXANE: Ah, hush!
CYRANO: A kiss is crowned,—Nay, Lady, think!
The Queen of France leaned to a lucky lord
And gave him one . . . the Queen!
ROXANE: Then . . . ?
CYRANO (*uplifted*): My adored,
I am like Buckingham, whose love was dumb;

Like him, I love a Queen; like him I come
As sad, as faithful. . . .

ROXANE: Though thou sayst it not,—
As beautiful!

CYRANO (*dashed, and speaking aside*): True, I am beautiful,
I had forgot!

ROXANE: So be it! Climb! Pluck this flower you praise for me.

CYRANO (*pushing* CHRISTIAN *toward the balcony*): Climb!

ROXANE: This heart's breath . . .

CYRANO: Climb!

ROXANE: This harping of the bee.

CYRANO: Climb!

CHRISTIAN:
I . . . think . . . this not the moment! Let it pass! . . .

ROXANE: This moment of infini . . .

CYRANO (*pushing*): Climb, you ass!

CHRISTIAN (*overcoming his panic, eagerly scrambles up, by the bench, the jutting stones the vines, and steps over the railing into the balcony.*)

CHRISTIAN: Ah, Roxane!
(*He puts his arms about her and bends his head to her lips.*)

CYRANO: Aie, heart that suffers thus!
O, feast of love where I am Lazarus!
A single crumb falls from the rich man's board.
My hungry heart devours it. 'Twas my word,—
Even mine,—that won that kiss. Her dear lips seek
His lips for words that I . . . I only . . . speak!
(*The archlutes sound.*)
A dance? A dirge? The friar again.
(*He pretends to run, as if he had just come up, and calls*):
Ho, there!

ROXANE: Who is it?

CYRANO: It is I. Christian still there?

CHRISTIAN (*much astonished*): What, Cyrano?

ROXANE: Greeting, my cousin.

CYRANO: Greeting.

ROXANE: I come . . .

(*She disappears into the house. Re-enter the Capuchin at the back.*)

CHRISTIAN (*seeing him*): Oh!

(*He follows* ROXANE.)

SCENE X

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN, ROXANE, *the Capuchin,* RAGUENEAU

THE FRIAR: It's here, I keep repeating,
Magdeleine Robin.

CYRANO: Why, you said Ro-*lin!*

THE FRIAR: No, I said bin, sir, b-i-n, sir, bin.

ROXANE (*appearing on the threshold, followed by* RAGUENEAU, *who carries a lantern, and by* CHRISTIAN): What is it?

THE FRIAR: A letter.

CHRISTIAN: Hein?

THE FRIAR: Some good affair
From a most worthy lord.

ROXANE (*to* CHRISTIAN): Of Guiche.

CHRISTIAN: He'd dare?

ROXANE: He importunes me, . . . but our moment comes,
I love thee and . . .

(*She takes the letter and breaks the seal. By the light of the lantern* RAGUENEAU *holds for her, she reads in a low voice*): *"My lady, the rude drums*
Beat loud. The Regiment has donned its mail.
It leaves, and thinks I led the way. I fail,
And from the monastery send this friar
To tell my disobedience,—my desire
To come to you,—and that I come. No goat
Is simple as the monk who bears this note.
He suspects nothing. Wait for me, alone.
Your smiles have made me mad. Let this atone
For my audacity, forgiven the rather
That I am one . . . et cetera. . . . "

My father,

Hear what is written by this holy scribe:
"Madam: 'Tis needful to subscribe
To th' Cardinal's will, however hearts rebel,
So I have chosen a friar known wide and well
For holiness, discretion, intellect,
To bring you this command. You must respect
The bearer and the message. He will give . . .
(*She turns a page.*)
The nuptial benediction,—where you live,
And secretly. Christian becomes your spouse.
Resign yourself. You suffer. But your vows
Will please High Heaven Who will bless your zeal.
Let me express the deep respect I feel
For your obedience, knowing that there are
Few harder duties. Yours . . . et cetera."

THE FRIAR (*beaming*): O worthy gentleman! I had no fear.
It *was* a good affair that brought me here.

ROXANE (*aside, to* CHRISTIAN):
Don't I read letters well? Tell me.

CHRISTIAN: Ah . . . hum.

ROXANE (*aloud, despairingly*): Oh, woe!

THE FRIAR (*who has flashed the light of his lantern on* CYRANO):
'Tis you?

CHRISTIAN: It's me.

THE FRIAR (*turning the light of his lantern on him and, as if a doubt assailed him, seeing* CHRISTIAN'S *beauty*):
But . . .

ROXANE (*hurriedly*): *"Post scriptum;*
Give five-score pistoles to the brotherhood."

THE FRIAR: Ah, worthy lord!
(*To* ROXANE) Submit.

ROXANE (*meekly*): I will be good.
(*While* RAGUENEAU *opens the door to the Capuchin, whom* CHRISTIAN *ushers into the house,* ROXANE *says in a whisper to* CYRANO): You'll keep the Count of Guiche?

CYRANO: Yes, on my oath!

ROXANE: He will soon be here. Keep him.
CYRANO (*to the* FRIAR): To plight their troth
You need? . . .
THE FRIAR: A quarter of an hour.
CYRANO (*hurrying them all into the house*):
Now what known power . . .
ROXANE (*to* CHRISTIAN): Come! (*They go in.*)
CYRANO: . . . Will hold the Count a quarter of an hour?
(*He springs up on the bench and climbs to the balcony.*)
Come, climb! I have my plan!
(*The archlutes play a lugubrious strain.*)
Hola! A man draws nigh,—
This time, a real one.
(*He is on the balcony; he pulls his hat down over his eyes; takes off his sword; wraps his cloak about him; then leans and looks down from the balcony.*)
No; that is not too high.
(*He steps over the railing, and pulls toward him a long branch of one of the trees which grow along the garden wall; then grasps it with both hands, ready to let himself drop.*)
I'm going to trouble this calm evening air.

SCENE XI

CYRANO, *the* COUNT OF GUICHE

GUICHE (*who enters, masked, stumbling in the dark*):
Where is that damned Capuchin, curse him? Where?
CYRANO: The devil! What about my voice?
(*Freeing the branch with one hand, he seems to turn an invisible key*): Cric, crac!
(*Solemnly*) Resume the accent, lad, of Bergerac!
GUICHE (*looking at the house*):
Oh, damn this mask! A light would be a boon.
(*He assures himself about the door he seeks, and is about to enter.* CYRANO *leaps from the balcony, holding on by the*

branch which, bending, lets him fall between the door and the COUNT OF GUICHE. *He pretends to fall heavily as if from a great height. Flat upon the ground, he lies motionless as if stunned. The* COUNT *leaps back.*)

GUICHE: Hein? What?

(*When he looks up, the branch has sprung back; he sees only the sky; he is mystified.*)

Whence came this fellow?

CYRANO (*sitting up and speaking with the Gascon accent*):

From the Moon!

GUICHE: From the . . .

CYRANO (*still speaking in a far-away voice*): What is the hour?

GUICHE: He's reft of reason.

CYRANO: What hour? What land? What day? What season?

GUICHE: But . . .

CYRANO: I'm dizzy.

GUICHE: Sir . . .

CYRANO: Giddy . . . for like a bomb
I hurtled from the moon.

GUICHE (*impatiently*): Nonsense, man.

CYRANO (*standing up and speaking in a terrible voice*):

Thence I come!

GUICHE (*recoiling*): So be it. You fell.
(*Aside*) A lunatic, of course.

CYRANO: Not metaphorically but with force.

GUICHE: But . . .

CYRANO: Centuries agone . . . or else, a minute, . . .
How long I fell, I know not. I was in it. . . .
That saffron ball up yonder in the sky!

GUICHE (*shrugging his shoulders*): Yes. Let me pass.

CYRANO (*intercepting him*): Be candid. Where am I?
Keep nothing from me. On what earthly site
Have I descended like an aerolite?

GUICHE: 'Sdeath!

CYRANO: Falling, I had no choice, nor time to tell
What should befall me,—nor where I be fell.

GUICHE: I tell you, sir . . .

CYRANO (*with a shriek of terror which makes the* COUNT *fall back*): Good Lord! Alack! Alack!
In this new country all the men are black!

GUICHE (*putting his hand to his face*): What?

CYRANO (*with every evidence of panic*): Am I in Algiers? Are all the men
Black as . . .

GUICHE (*who has felt his mask*): This mask!

CYRANO (*feigning assurance*): I am in Venice then.

GUICHE (*trying to pass*): I came to meet a lady.

CYRANO (*completely reassured*): I'm in Paris!

GUICHE (*laughing in spite of himself*): The droll is fairly droll.

CYRANO: You laugh? . . .

GUICHE: Yes . . . there is
No less desire to pass.

CYRANO: Paris, no doubt.
(*He is quite at ease, now; he laughs, brushes off the dust of his fall, bows.*)

CYRANO: I came,—your pardon,—through a waterspout,
Cloudburst, that left its spray. I have journeyed, sir.
My eyes are full of stardust. Ha, . . . this spur
Caught in a comet's tail. This golden tinge.
(*He brushes his sleeve delicately.*)
Here, on my doublet, is a meteor's fringe.
(*He blows it away, daintily.*)

GUICHE (*beside himself*): Sir . . .

CYRANO (*as the* COUNT *tries to pass, stops him by thrusting out his leg, as if to show him something*):
See, there, on my calf,—mark of a tooth?
The Great Bear bit me. As I dodged, forsooth
I missed the Trident but I fell ker-plunk!
Into the Balances. See, they are sunk!
They mark my weight. Look how the record lingers.
(*He buttonholes the* COUNT, *who tries to pass him.*)
If you should tweak my nose between your fingers,
'Twould prove a fount of milk.

GUICHE: Milk?
CYRANO: Even
From the Milky Way.
GUICHE: Oh, go to hell!
CYRANO: I came from Heaven.
(*He crosses his arms.*)
Would you believe, Sirius,—I saw this sight,—
Puts on a cloudy nightcap every night?
(*Confidentially*)
The Little Bear can't bite;—he tries to nip.
(*Laughing*)
I broke a string in Lyra by a slip.
(*Superbly*)
I mean to write my travels in a book.
These stars entangled in my mantle,—look,—
When I've recorded all my diverse risks,
These captured stars shall serve as asterisks.
GUICHE: Nevertheless, I wish . . .
CYRANO: I get you now!
GUICHE: Sir . . .
CYRANO: You would learn,—'tis reasonable enow,—
From one who has been there, if it's made of cheese,
Or if folk live there natural as you please.
GUICHE (*storming*): But no! I wish . . .
CYRANO: To hear of my ascension?
'Twas by a method of my own invention.
GUICHE (*discouraged*): Fool!
CYRANO: Regiomontanus tried an eagle's wings;
Archytas made a pigeon,—silly things!
GUICHE: A fool, of course, and yet a learnéd fool.
CYRANO: I never imitate,—I *make* the rule.
(*The* COUNT *has succeeded in passing him and he strides to* ROXANE'S *door.* CYRANO *follows him, ready to lay hold on him.*)
By six sure methods I can rise like vapor.
GUICHE (*turning*): Six?

CYRANO: I could stand naked like a waxen taper,
Caparisoned with crystal phials clear,
Unstoppled, filled with summer's earliest tear,—
My body to the sunlight I'd expose,
And it were lifted as the dew arose.

GUICHE (*his attention engaged, taking a step toward* CYRANO):
Ho! That makes one way.
(CYRANO *draws back as* GUICHE *approaches.*)

CYRANO: And again, I might
Draw winds into a vacuum,—keep it tight,—
Rarify them, by glowing mirrors, pressed
Isosahedron-wise within a chest.

GUICHE (*coming another step*): Two!

CYRANO: Then, both mechanic and inventor, I
Make a steel grasshopper and let it fly
By swift explosions, till it fire me far
To the blue pastures of the farthest star.

GUICHE (*following him, unsuspectingly, as* CYRANO *leads him to the other side of the way, always farther from* ROXANE'S *door*): Three!

CYRANO: Or, since smoke rises in its natural state,
I'd catch a globeful, equal to my weight.

GUICHE (*same business, always more and more astonished*):
Four!

CYRANO: Luna loves, what time her bow is narrow,
To suck beef-marrow, so I'd smear with marrow.

GUICHE (*amazed*): Five!

CYRANO (*who as he talks has led him to the other side of the square, near a bench*): On an iron disc I'd stand with care,
And toss a lodestone lightly in the air.
That is a good way. When the iron flew,
Drawn by the magnet, as we nearer drew,
I'd catch the magnet,—toss it up! You see,
One might keep climbing through eternity.

GUICHE: Six! And all excellent. Now, tell me, pray,
Which method did you choose?
CYRANO: A seventh way!
GUICHE: Indeed! And what?
CYRANO: Give up! You'd never guess!
GUICHE: Stark mad, but most ingenious none the less.
CYRANO (*making a sound like waves on the shore, and wide, mysterious gestures*): Woosh! Woosh!
GUICHE: What's that?
CYRANO: You've guessed it?
GUICHE: No.
CYRANO: It is the ocean!
When the moon moved the yearning tide to motion
I lay out on the sands, wave-wet, and so
My head was moved, and lifted . . . lifted slow,—
Hair holds the water, sir,—and *very* slowly,
I rose, just like an angel, stiff and holy.
Effortless, splendid, high above all men
I rose . . . I rose . . . I felt a shock. . . .
GUICHE (*engulfed in curiosity and sitting down on the bench*):
And then? . . .
CYRANO: Then . . .
(*Taking his natural voice once more.*)
The time is up, Sir, and I set you free.
The wedding's over.
GUICHE (*leaping to his feet*): What has come over me?
That voice!
(*The house door swings open; lackeys appear carrying lighted sconces. A flood of light.* CYRANO, *with a sweeping bow, doffs his plumed hat.*)
GUICHE: That nose!
CYRANO (*saluting*): Sir, while we spoke of wings,
Exchanging fancies, they exchanged their wings.
GUICHE: Who?
(*They turn. Behind the lackeys,* ROXANE *and* CHRISTIAN, *hand in hand. The Friar follows them, smiling benignly.*

RAGUENEAU *holds a torch high. The Duenna brings up the rear of the procession, a bewildered figure in a short bed gown.*)

SCENE XII

The Same, ROXANE, CHRISTIAN, *the Friar,* RAGUENEAU, *Lackeys, the Duenna.*

GUICHE (*to* ROXANE): You?
(*Recognizing* CHRISTIAN *with stupefaction*): He!
(*Bowing low to* ROXANE): Most artfully contrived!
(*To* CYRANO): My compliments. The perils you survived,
And your inventions, would arrest a mortal,
Though he were saint, at heaven's very portal.
Pray, sir, record them, for the future's sake.

CYRANO (*bowing*): Sir, 'tis a counsel I engage to take.

THE FRIAR (*pointing to the lovers, wagging his long white beard and addressing the* COUNT *with great satisfaction*): A handsome couple! They obeyed you well.

GUICHE (*looking at him stonily*): Yes.
(*To* ROXANE): Madam kindly bid your spouse farewell.

ROXANE: What? Why?

GUICHE (*to* CHRISTIAN): The Regiment already marches out. Join it.

ROXANE: To go to war?

GUICHE: Aye, past all doubt.

ROXANE: But the Cadets go not.

GUICHE: They go, indeed.
(*He takes a paper from his pocket.*)
The orders. (*To* CHRISTIAN)
Take them, Baron, and with speed.

ROXANE (*throwing herself into* CHRISTIAN'S *arms*): Christian!

GUICHE (*chuckling, to* CYRANO): The nuptial night is far off, still.

CYRANO (*aside*): He thinks that thought has done me mortal ill.

CHRISTIAN (*to* ROXANE): Thy lips, . . . once more, . . .
once more!
CYRANO: Enough. Ah, go!
CHRISTIAN (*still embracing* ROXANE): 'Tis hard to give her
up. Thou knowst not.
CYRANO: *Aye,* I know!
(*Far away, drums are heard, sounding a march.*)
GUICHE (*coming forward*): The Regiment departs.
ROXANE (*to* CYRANO, *while she holds* CHRISTIAN *back, as*
CYRANO *tries to lead him away*): I trust you. Oh,
Don't let him be in danger, Cyrano!
Promise!
CYRANO: I'll try. And yet, however prayerful,
One cannot always . . .
ROXANE: Promise he'll be careful!
CYRANO: I'll do my utmost. . . .
ROXANE: Make him take some rest,
And not get chilled.
CYRANO: I'll do my *very* best.
But . . .
ROXANE: That he will be faithful.
CYRANO: I declare
I am sure . . .
ROXANE: That he'll write often!
CYRANO (*standing suddenly motionless*): That, I swear!

(*Curtain*)

ACT IV

Cadets of Gascony

The post occupied by the company of Carbon of Castel-Jaloux *at the Siege of Arras.*

In the background breastworks traverse the entire scene. Beyond, a plain stretches to the horizon. The ground is furrowed with earthworks. Far away, against the sky line, the walls and roofs of Arras.

Tents; scattered arms; drums, etc.

It is near daybreak. The East is pale gold.

Sentinels are posted at intervals. Camp fires burn low. Rolled in their cloaks, the Cadets of Gascony sleep. Carbon of Castel-Jaloux *and* Le Bret *watch. They are pale and very thin. In the foreground, wrapped in his cloak,* Christian *sleeps among the rest, his face lit by the firelight. Silence.*

SCENE I

Christian, Carbon of Castel-Jaloux, Le Bret, *the Cadets; later,* Cyrano

Le Bret: Horrible!

Carbon: Nothing is left!

Le Bret: 'Sdeath!

Carbon (*signing to him to speak softly*):

Soft! Lest thou wake them! Swear beneath thy breath.
(*To the Cadets*) 'Shsh! Sleep. Who sleeps dines.

Le Bret: And who wakes, dines not.
What dearth! What famine!
(*A gunshot is heard in the distance.*)

Carbon: Curse that noisy shot!
They'll wake my children.
(*To some Cadets, who stir*) Sleep!

A CADET (*moving uneasily*): Damn it! They begin
Again.
CARBON: It's nothing. Cyrano comes in.
(*The lifted heads fall back; the Cadets sleep again.*)
A SENTINEL (*without*): Zounds! Who goes there?
THE VOICE OF CYRANO: Bergerac!
THE SENTINEL (*on the ramparts*): Give the word.
CYRANO (*appearing on the crest of the ramparts*):
Bergerac, you fool.
LE BRET (*going to meet him, disgusted*): Good Lord!
CYRANO (*signing to him not to wake the Cadets*): Sh!
LE BRET: Wounded?
CYRANO: Nay! Thou knowst it is their rule
To miss me every morning.
LE BRET: Such a fool!
Each day! To take a letter! . . . Nearly light. . . .
Always this risk . . . !
CYRANO (*stopping at* CHRISTIAN'S *side*): I promised he would
write.
(*He looks at him.*) He sleeps. He is pale. Poor child, she
does not know
He is starving. . . . But still beautiful.
LE BRET: Oh, go
And get some sleep.
CYRANO: Don't scold, Le Bret. I have found
A way to cross their lines both safe and sound.
A post that's guarded,—but by drunken men.
LE BRET: I wish you brought some victuals with you, then!
CYRANO: One must tread lightly! But, being near their trench,
I got an inkling that ere night the French
Will eat or die.
LE BRET: Quick . . . . tell!
CYRANO: Nay, wait and see.
I am not sure. . . .
CARBON: What shame, what infamy
Besiegers die of hunger!

LE BRET: Aye, alas!
Never was siege like this siege of Arras.
We compass Arras. Cardinal Infant
Of Spain besieges us,—and brings this want.
CYRANO: Now, someone should besiege the Heir of Spain.
LE BRET: I do not laugh.
CYRANO: Oh, oh!
LE BRET: Large risk,—small gain.
Thy life against a letter. Oh, I smother
With rage. Where now?
(*Seeing him go toward a tent.*)
CYRANO: I go to write another.
(*He raises the tent flap and disappears.*)

SCENE II

The Same, without CYRANO

The dawn brightens. There are rosy streaks along the eastern sky. The city of Arras is gold on the horizon. A cannon shot is heard; followed by the sound of distant drums on the left. Other drums sound nearer. They come closer, as if they were at hand, and then go farther away on the right, going through the whole camp. The camp is waking. Officers' voices are heard in the distance.

CARBON: The bugle-call. Alas, it is so fleet
Succulent sleep! I know what they will cry.
A CADET (*sitting up*): Something to eat!
ANOTHER: I starve.
CARBON: Get up.
THIRD CADET: I cannot move.
FOURTH CADET: No good.
THE FIRST (*using his cuirass as a mirror*):
My tongue is coated. Wind's unwholesome food.
ANOTHER: I'd give my baron's wreath for bread and cheese.
Achilles sulked when far less ill at ease.

ANOTHER: Is his wind-pipe a fellow's only pipe?
I want some food. I'm tired of eating tripe!
ANOTHER: Bread!
CARBON (*going to the tent into which* CYRANO *disappeared, and whispering*): Cyrano!
OTHER CADETS: We die!
CARBON (*still in a whisper, at the tent flap*):
Come to our aid.
They feed upon thy banter. I am dismayed. . . .
Rally them, thou!
SECOND CADET (*rushing up to the first, who is chewing something*): Hey, there, what is't you munch?
FIRST CADET: I have a bit of greasy tow for lunch.
It's soaked in axle grease for cannon wheels.
Outskirts of Arras furnish luscious meals.
ANOTHER (*entering*): I have been hunting.
ANOTHER (*coming in at the same moment*): I fished in the Scarp.
ALL (*getting up and rushing toward the newcomers*):
What did you get? A pheasant? You? A carp?
Quick! Show us, quick!
THE FISHER: A gudgeon.
THE HUNTER: Sparrow.
ALL (*exasperated*): Oh!
Enough. Let's mutiny!
CARBON: Help, Cyrano!
(*It is bright daylight.*)

SCENE III

The Same, CYRANO

CYRANO (*coming out of his tent; calm; a pen behind his ear, a book in his hand*): Hein?
(*To the* FIRST CADET): Why dost thou tread with such a halting gait?
THE CADET: I've something in my shoe,—a dragging weight.
CYRANO: Why, what is that?

THE CADET: A stomach.
CYRANO: So have I.
THE CADET: It must impede you.
CYRANO: No, it lifts me high.
ANOTHER: My teeth feel long.
CYRANO: Hold fast, with teeth so large.
A THIRD: My belly rumbles.
CYRANO: It will sound the charge.
ANOTHER: My ears are ringing.
CYRANO: 'Tis a lie he hears.
Who rang a breakfast bell in that man's ears?
ANOTHER: Something to eat, with oil!
CYRANO (*snatching his helmet off and thrusting it into his hands*):
Thy salad, lad.
ANOTHER: What is there to devour?
CYRANO (*tossing him the book he had in his hand*): The Iliad.
ANOTHER: The minister at Paris richly dines.
CYRANO: Shall he send grouse, or quail?
THE CADET: Why not? And wines!
CYRANO: Burgundy, Richelieu! This delay is rude.
THE CADET: By what Capuchin?
CYRANO: Oh, some friar,—stewed.
ANOTHER: I'm hungry as a hound!
CYRANO: Then eat thy hair.
THE FIRST CADET: Absurd!
Always the word, the point!
CYRANO: Always the point, the word!
And I would die, at eve 'neath rosy skies,
Making a brave jest for a high emprise!
Pierced by the only noble weapon made,
And by a knightly foeman; unafraid;
On glory's field,—not deathbed's dull eclipse;
A point within my heart,—and on my lips!
A CRY FROM ALL THE CADETS: I am hungry!
CYRANO (*folding his arms*): What? You talk of food again?
Come, Bertrandou the fifer, ancient swain,

Take from its leathern case thy ebon fife.
These greedy-guts think meat is more than life.
Play to them, . . . country airs, . . . the soft notes falling
Like little sisters' voices, calling, calling;
Songs of our land; echoes of our own folk,
Airs that rise gently like the wreaths of smoke
That from the hearthfires of our birthplace come,—
Old airs that seem the very voice of home!
(*The old fifer sits down and draws out his fife.*)
Now let thy fife, a soldier tried and good,
Recall, a moment, feeling on her wood
Thy fingers move like song birds, light and free,
She was a reed, ere she was ebony!
Let her own voice surprise her soul in sooth,
Call back her rustic peace, her heart of youth!
(*The old man begins to play Languedocian airs.*)
Oh, listen, Gascons! The shrill fife is mute.
Under his fingers, 'tis a woodland flute.
No breath of battle echoes in these notes.
It is the galoubet that calls the goats!
Hark . . . 'tis the vale, the wood, the land outspread;
The small brown goatherd, with his bonnet red; . . .
Green twilight . . . rivers whispering to the lea.
Ah, listen, Gascons. It is Gascony.
(*All the heads are bowed; all the eyes dream; tears are furtively dried on sleeves or hems of cloaks.*)

CARBON (*to* CYRANO): You make them weep.

CYRANO: Nostalgia is an ill
Nobler than hunger. Man is spirit still!
I love the change the airs of home could make.
The heart-ache helps to heal their belly-ache.

CARBON: Making them tender, thou wilt make them weak.

CYRANO (*who signs to a drummer to approach*):
No fear! Their heroes' blood is swift to speak,
Quick to awaken.
(*He gives a signal. The drum sounds.*)

ALL (*springing up and seizing their arms*):
Hein? What? What's that?
CYRANO: That soul
Wakes to one drum beat, to a single roll.
Farewell, dreams, tears, regrets, old scenes! And come
All the flute banished,—wakened by the drum!
A CADET (*who has been looking toward the background*):
Ah, hah! The Count of Guiche.
ALL THE CADETS (*grumbling*): Huh!
CYRANO (*smiling*): How that charmer
Is welcomed, here.
A CADET: He makes us tired!
ANOTHER: His armor
Decked with lace collars,—man you can't rely on.
ANOTHER: Linen wa'n't made to wear atop of iron!
FIRST CADET: Good if you have a boil, a fat feruncle!
SECOND CADET: The courtier, always.
ANOTHER: Nephew of his uncle.
CARBON: Still he's a Gascon.
FIRST CADET: Title's rather hazy.
Because . . . why, Gascons . . . Gascons must be crazy.
A sober Gascon is too dangerous.
LE BRET: He is pale.
ANOTHER: Hungry, poor devil, like the rest of us!
But, since his breastplate is with silver dight,
His cramping belly twinkles in the light!
CYRANO (*hurriedly*): Dice! Cards! He mustn't find us in the dumps!
(*In a moment, they all begin to play cards, to throw dice, sitting on drums or camp stools or their cloaks on the ground; they light long pipes.*)
CYRANO (*taking a slim volume out of his pocket*):
Discard Descartes? No, books are always trumps!
(*He walks up and down, reading. The* COUNT OF GUICHE *enters. Everybody seems occupied and cheerful. He is very pale. He goes to* CARBON.)

SCENE IV

The Same, the COUNT OF GUICHE

GUICHE (*to* CARBON): Good morning.
(*They scrutinize each other. Aside, with satisfaction*):
He is green.
CARBON (*aside*): He is all eyes.
GUICHE (*looking at the Cadets*):
Here are my critics, then? Yes, I am wise,—
I have reports of the abuse one hears;
That the Cadets,—these lofty mountaineers,—
These rowdy squires,—barons of Perigord,—
Have for their Colonel not a decent word;
That I am called courtier, schemer; that I fail
To please them wearing lace above my mail;
That it offends them, in good sooth, to see
A Gascon, who yet goes not beggarly.
(*Silence. They play. They smoke.*)
Pray, shall I have your captain punish you?
No.
CARBON: It is, moreover, what I will not do.
GUICHE: Ah?
CARBON: I pay my Company; 'tis mine, till death.
I obey field orders only.
GUICHE: Ah? My faith,
That settles it.
(*Addressing himself to the Cadets*):
I can despise your folly;
The world knows how I face the muskets' volley.
At Baupaume yesterday, they hailed with joy
The way I met and put to rout Bucquoi.
Ah, there was action lessers fights to dwarf!
Three times I charged!
CYRANO (*without raising his eyes from his book*):
And what about your scarf?
GUICHE (*surprised and gratified*):

You know that detail? Thus it came about,—
'Twas as I wheeled to follow up the rout.
Assembling my command for this third charge,
Some fleeing foemen swept me to the marge
Of their main force. I saw I might be hit,
Or captured surely. So I had the wit
To loose the scarf of white that told the wor
Of such a capture,—let it slip to earth;
Without insignia to attract their aim,
I dodged the Spaniards. When once more I came,
I led the Regiment! Ah, that is war!
What do you say?
(*The Cadets have appeared not to listen; but now cards and dice boxes are held suspended; the pipe smoke is held in their cheeks. Attention.*)

CYRANO: That Henry of Navarre
Had not consented,—to give safety room,—
To lower himself by doffing his white plume.
(*Silent joy. The cards are lowered; dice rattle; smoke exhales.*)

GUICHE: The dodge succeeded well.
(*Same expectancy; cards, dice and pipes held in suspense.*)

CYRANO: Though that may be,
To be a target for the enemy
Is not an honour one would lightly yield.
(*Cards are shuffled; dice are thrown; smoke wreaths rise; waxing satisfaction.*)
Had I been present, sir, upon that field,
—Our courage differs thus,—I should have raised
And worn it.

GUICHE: Still Gascon, still self-praised!

CYRANO: Self-praised!
Lend it to me! This morning under fire,
I'll lead the assault and wear it in saltire!

GUICHE: A Gascon's offer, knowing well the scarp
Lies with the enemy along the Scarpe,

In a place hotly raked by canister.
No one can fetch it.

CYRANO (*taking the white military scarp from his pocket and handing it to him*): I have brought it, sir.

(*Silence. The Cadets cover their laughter in the hands dealt them and in dice-boxes. The* COUNT *turns to look at them. Immediately they are grave again; they resume their play; one whistles the air the fifer played.*)

GUICHE: I thank you. Having this fair scarp to shake,
I'll make a signal I was loathe to make.

(*He climbs to the top of the breastworks and waves the scarf repeatedly.*)

THE SENTINEL (*on the breastworks*):
That man down there, who saves himself by running! . . .

GUICHE (*coming down*): A traitor spy. I've matched the Spaniard's cunning.
He serves us well, bearing them information—
Which I supply. You see, by this gradation
I influence the game that they are playing.

CYRANO: A scurvy knave!

GUICHE (*carelessly, knotting his scarf*):
But useful. . . . We were saying? . . .
Ah, yes! I meant to tell you this. Last night,—
A desperate hazard for our desperate plight,—
The Marshall marched to Dourlens, on the chance
Of joining there the sutlers' stores of France,
To revictual us. But, since supplies encumber,
He drew upon the troops to such a number
The foe would find an easy task, attacking
Our camp to-day. Why, half the army's lacking.

CARBON: That might be serious if our friends the foe
Knew of that sortie. But they don't?

GUICHE: They know.
They will attack.

CARBON: Ah!

GUICHE: Their false spy's . . . indiscretion

Enabled me to learn of their aggression.
He added, "My report when I go back
Decides it. At what point shall they attack?
I shall report that place as least defended.
There they will concentrate." So, when he ended,
I answered, "Good. Go, watch along the line.
Bid them attack where you descry my sign!"

CARBON (*to the Cadets*): Make ready, gentlemen!

(*They all rise. Clatter of swords and buckling on of belts.*)

GUICHE: One hour hence. . . .

FIRST CADET: Oh! . . . Play!

(*They all sit down again and resume the interrupted game.*)

GUICHE (*to* CARBON): We must gain time. The Marshall's on the way.

CARBON: And to gain time . . . ?

GUICHE: Why, you will have the kindness
To let yourselves be killed.

CYRANO: And you, avenged?

GUICHE: 'Twere blindness
To think I love you. I pretend naught. Still,
While choosing you and yours suits me not ill,
Your crazy courage is a far-famed thing,
And serving my revenge, I serve my King.

CYRANO: I am your debtor for this thing you've done.

GUICHE: You like to fight a hundred to your one.
I'll not withhold the opportunity.

(*He goes toward* CARBON.)

CYRANO: We'll deck her blazon, lads of Gascony!
Six chevrons, gold and azure, make it gay;—
We'll add a crimson chevron, boys, to-day.

(GUICHE *speaks in a low voice to* CARBON OF CASTEL-JALOUX. *Orders are given. The defense is prepared.* CYRANO *goes toward* CHRISTIAN, *who stands motionless, his arms crossed on his breast.*)

CYRANO (*putting his hand on* CHRISTIAN'S *shoulder*):
Christian?

CHRISTIAN (*mournfully shaking his head*): Roxane!
CYRANO: Alas!
CHRISTIAN: I could bear it better
If I could say good-bye in one fair letter.
CYRANO: I thought 'twould be to-day—Oh, just a guess . . .
(*He takes a letter from his breast.*)
I wrote thy farewell.
CHRISTIAN: Show me.
CYRANO: Show . . . ?
CHRISTIAN: Why, yes!
(CHRISTIAN *opens it, begins to read, stops suddenly.*)
Hold . . . !
CYRANO: What?
CHRISTIAN: This little ring . . . ?
CYRANO (*hastily seizes the letter, and looks at it with an innocent air*): A ring?
CHRISTIAN: A tear!
CYRANO: Yes . . . Yes . . . A poet finds his work so dear . . .
He is enwrapt. . . . This was . . . a moving theme.
I moved myself to tears, with this, thy dream.
CHRISTIAN: Tears . . . ?
CYRANO: Yes . . . because . . . death is not terrible,
But . . . never see her more! That's horrible!
For nevermore will I . . .
(CHRISTIAN *stares at him.*) . . . will we . . .
(*Hastily*) wilt thou . . .
CHRISTIAN (*snatching the letter from him*): Give it to me!
(*Afar, one hears a noise in the camp.*)
VOICE *of the* SENTINEL: 'Odsbody, who comes now?
(*Musket shots. Voices. Jingle of harness.*)
CARBON: What's this?
SENTINEL (*on the ramparts*): A coach!
(*Everybody rushes to see.*)
CRIES: A coach in camp! A wonder!
And from the Spaniard's side! Blood, death and thunder!

Fire! No! The coachman's calling. . . . What's this thing?
He is crying, "Service of the King!"

GUICHE: The King?

(*Everybody falls back and forms in line.*)

CARBON: Heads bared!

GUICHE (*calling*): Fall in, there! 'Tis the King he serves.
Give place. With due pomp let him make the curves.

(*The coach comes on at a full trot. It is covered with mud and dust. The curtains are drawn. Two footmen ride behind. It comes sharply to a halt.*)

CARBON (*calling*): Sound the salute!

(*The drums roll. All the Cadets stand with bared heads.*)

GUICHE: Let down the steps!

(*Two men leap to obey. The door is opened.*)

ROXANE (*springing from the coach*): Good day!

(*The sound of a woman's voice brings up in a flash all the heads that were so profoundly bowed. Stupefaction.*)

SCENE V

The Same, ROXANE

GUICHE: King's business. . . . You? . . .

ROXANE: King Love! What other, pray?

CYRANO: Great God!

CHRISTIAN (*rushing forward*): You! Why?

ROXANE: The siege went slowly, sir.

CHRISTIAN: Why? . . .

ROXANE: I will tell thee. . . .

CYRANO (*who, at the sound of her voice, has stood, head bared, immobile, not daring to lift his eyes*): God! To look on her!

GUICHE: You cannot stay here.

ROXANE: But I will, you know.
Will you bring up that drum?

(*She seats herself on the drum which somebody hastens to bring for her.*) Ah, thank you! So!
(*She laughs.*) My coach was fired on! Truly!
(*Proudly.*) A patrol!
'Tis like the pumpkin coach, upon my soul—
Now, isn't it? Just like the fairy tale,
With the rat footmen.
(*Throwing a kiss to* CHRISTIAN *with the tips of her fingers.*)
Greeting!
(*She looks at everybody.*) You are pale.
Do you know 'tis far, to Arras?
(*Seeing* CYRANO): Greeting, Cousin. La me!

CYRANO (*coming forward*): How could you. . . . Oh . . . ?

ROXANE: How could I find the Army?
My friend, it was too simple. We drove straight
Where all the land was ravaged,—desolate.
Ah, God! the horror! No one could believe,
Not having seen. Sirs, if your king receive
Such service,—mine's a better king!

CYRANO: 'Tis mad!
Now, how the devil could you pass?

ROXANE: We had
To come by the Spanish lines.

FIRST CADET: The subtle Shes!

GUICHE: How could you pass their lines and come to these?

LE BRET: Surely, most difficult.

ROXANE: Why, no, not very.
We just drove through, my coach with my equerry.
If some hidalgo showed a visage grim,
Through parted curtains, I just smiled at him.
Those greatest gallants of the world,—I say
So much to Frenchmen,—sped me on my way.

CARBON: Certes, it is a passport,—Roxane's smile!
And yet, they must have asked you, mile by mile,
Whither you went?

ROXANE: Oh, that? Yes, oft and over!

I answered, "Sirs, I go to see my lover."
At that, the Spaniard of the fiercest mien
Would close the door, as if he served a queen,
And with a gesture worthy of a king,
Wave back the guns already threatening,—
With all the haughty grandeur of his race
Stand, so the wind would ruffle his sleeve lace
And show his plumes like breeze-blown pampas grass;
Then—"Señorita," bowing, "you may pass."

CHRISTIAN: But Roxane . . .

ROXANE: I said, "my lover," spite our vows.
Thou knowest, love, if I had said, "my spouse,"
They wouldn't let me pass.

CHRISTIAN: But . . .

ROXANE: What is wrong?

GUICHE: You must go.

ROXANE: I?

CYRANO: With speed!

LE BRET: Oh, go along!

CHRISTIAN: Yes!

ROXANE: Why?

CHRISTIAN (*embarrassed*): Because . . . because . . .

CYRANO (*same*): Oh, while we prattle . . .

GUICHE (*same*): The hour speeds . . .

CARBON (*same*): You'd best . . .

LE BRET (*same*): You might . . .

ROXANE: A battle!
I shall stay.

ALL: No!

ROXANE: My husband!
(*She throws herself into* CHRISTIAN'S *arms*): We will die
Together.

CHRISTIAN: How your eyes shine!

ROXANE: Knowst thou why?

GUICHE (*frantic*): This is a fearful post!

ROXANE (*turning*): Fearful?

CYRANO: Needs but to state
He gave it us.
ROXANE: You'd have me desolate,—
Widowed . . . ?
GUICHE: I swear! . . .
ROXANE: Nay, I am mad! Refusing
To leave, I please myself. It is . . . amusing.
CYRANO: What's here? The Euphuist is heroine?
ROXANE: My lord of Bergerac, we two are kin.
A CADET: We will defend you well!
ROXANE (*more and more feverishly excited*): My friends, I know it!
ANOTHER (*intoxicated with joy*): The whole camp smells of orris!
ROXANE: I can show it,—
How well this hat becomes me in a fight.
(*Looking at the* COUNT OF GUICHE):
Perhaps 'tis time the Count were taking flight;
The action might begin.
GUICHE: This is too much. I am gone
To inspect the guns. I shall return anon.
'Tis not too late. Give up this frantic plan.
Ah, come away.
ROXANE: Never!
(GUICHE *goes out.*)

SCENE VI

The Same, without the COUNT OF GUICHE

CHRISTIAN (*imploring*): Roxane, Roxane!
ROXANE: No.
FIRST CADET (*to the others*): She stays!
ALL (*rushing about, jostling, snatching*): My soap! A razor! Ass,
Where is my comb? A pin! A looking glass!
ROXANE (*to* CYRANO, *who tries to move her*):
No power on earth can budge me from this place.

CARBON (*after having, like the rest, brushed his uniform, dusted his wide hat, pranked his plume, and settled his cuffs, advances toward* ROXANE): Will you permit, of your exceeding grace,
That I present these barons who adore you,
Who'll have the honour soon to die before you?

ROXANE (*bows assent and standing waiting, her hand on* CHRISTIAN'S *arm.*)

CARBON (*presents*):
Baron of Peyrescous of Colignac.

THE CADET (*saluting*): Madam . . .

CARBON (*continuing*): Of Casterac of Cahuzac,
Vidame of Malgouvre of Escarabiot,—
Chevalier of Antignac, Baron Hillot
Of Castel-Crabioules of Salechan. . . .

ROXANE: How many names has each?

BARON HILLOT: Crowds,—every man!

CARBON: Open the hand that holds your handkerchief.

(ROXANE *opens her hand and the handkerchief drops.*)

ROXANE: Why?

(*Every man in the Company stoops to pick it up.*)

CARBON (*quickly picking it up himself, ahead of them all*):
We lacked a banner. Now, 'tis my belief,
We have the bonniest in all this place.

ROXANE (*smiling*): 'Tis rather tiny.

CARBON: But already lace!

(*He attaches the little handkerchief to his Captain's lance.*)

A CADET (*to the others*): I could die happy with that face in sight,
If I could hand my stomach just one bite!

CARBON (*who has heard; indignant*):
Shame! "Talk of eating, when a lovely woman . . . "

ROXANE: Camp air whets appetite. And, being human,
I too am hungry. Pastry, meat and wine,—
Bring me my breakfast, please.
(*Consternation.*)

A CADET: She wants to dine!
ANOTHER: Good God, where will we get it?
ROXANE (*serenely*): In my coach.
ALL: Hein?
ROXANE: You must carve and serve. As you approach,
Observe the coachman closely, gentlemen;—
A man of many arts, you meet again.
Ask him, if you would have the sauces vary!
THE CADETS (*running to the coach*): It is Ragueneau!
(*Acclamations*): Oh, oh!
ROXANE (*following them with her eyes*): Poor lads!
CYRANO (*kissing her hand*): Good fairy!
RAGUENEAU (*standing up on the coachman's box like a mountebank at a fair*): Gentlemen. . . .
THE CADETS (*wild enthusiasm*): Bravo!
RAGUENEAU: As the foe we passed,
He knew we passed,—but knew not what repast!
(*Great applause.*)
CYRANO (*whispering to* CHRISTIAN): Hum . . . Christian . . .
RAGUENEAU: Asked our aim,—learned the same,—
(*He draws from under the box-seat a great platter of game.*)
—Yes, heard our aim, nor knew it brought down game!
(*Applause. The platter is handed from hand to hand.*)
CYRANO (*to* CHRISTIAN, *whispering*): One word, I beg. . . .
RAGUENEAU: Venus so moved his heart,
He quite forgot . . .
(*He waves a haunch of venison.*) Diana had a hart.
(*Waxing enthusiasm. The roast is seized by twenty outstretched hands.*)
CYRANO (*whispering to* CHRISTIAN): I want to tell thee . . .
ROXANE (*to the Cadets who are coming down, their arms full of provisions*): Put it on the ground.
(*She spreads a tablecloth on the grass, aided by two imperturbable footmen from the coach.*)
ROXANE (*to* CHRISTIAN, *as* CYRANO *tries to take him aside*):
Come and be useful.

RAGUENEAU: A peacock.

FIRST CADET (*coming down, carving a great dish of ham as he comes*): I'll be bound
We will not die without the recollection
Of one great gorge. . . . Oh, hell! . . .
(*Checking himself at sight of* ROXANE.) I mean, refrection.

RAGUENEAU (*tossing down the carriage cushions*):
Cushions full of ortolans.
(*Tumult. They empty the cushions. Laughter. Joy.*)

THIRD CADET: Aha, my boobies!

RAGUENEAU (*producing white wine*): Flagons of topaz!
(*Flasks of red wine.*) Flagons of rubies!

ROXANE (*tossing a folded cloth to* CYRANO):
Unfold this tablecloth. Quick! Show more ardor!

RAGUENEAU (*flourishing one of the coach lamps*):
Each lantern is a tiny kitchen larder.

CYRANO (*whispering to* CHRISTIAN *as they spread the cloth, together*): A word with thee, before Roxane has hers!

RAGUENEAU (*more and more lyrical, cracking his whip*):
No cracker, but an Arlesne sausage, sirs!

ROXANE (*pouring wine and serving*):
Since we must die for all, 'tis fair, you see,
To feast for all, Cadets of Gascony.
If the Count comes, let's offer him no share.
(*Going from one to another.*)
There still is time. . . . Don't eat so fast . . . There, there!
A little wine? You weep! Why?

FIRST CADET: I am fed!

ROXANE: Tut . . . Red or white wine? Hand the Captain bread.
A knife! Your plate! A bit of crust? I'll pour you
Champagne? Ah, just this wing? Please!

CYRANO (*who follows her, his arms piled high, helping her serve, aside*): I adore you!

ROXANE (*going toward* CHRISTIAN): You?

CHRISTIAN: Nothing!

ROXANE: This biscuit? Muscatelle,—
Two fingers?
CHRISTIAN: Tell me why you came?
ROXANE: I'll tell
You presently. These poor lads need me now.
LE BRET (*who has gone back, to reach the sentinel on the rampart with half a loaf of bread impaled on his lance*):
The Count of Guiche!
CYRANO: Hide the game-basket, flagon, platter, dish!
Quick! Now, look innocent. No trace of food!
(*To* RAGUENEAU): Climb to thy seat. All's hid?
(*In the twinkling of an eye, the food is thrust under tent flaps, stuffed into doublets; under capes; into hats. The* COUNT OF GUICHE *enters hastily, and stops suddenly, sniffing the air. Silence.*)

SCENE VII

The Same, the COUNT OF GUICHE

GUICHE: Something smells good.
A CADET (*humming with an absent-minded air*): To lo lo . . .
GUICHE (*looking at him critically*): What ails you? You look red.
THE CADET: Me? Scent of battle. Joy goes to my head.
ANOTHER: Poum . . . poum . . . poum.
GUICHE (*turning*): What's that?
THE CADET (*a little affected by the wine*): That's a ballade,
A little . . .
GUICHE: You are strangely gay, my lad.
THE CADET: Approach of danger.
GUICHE (*calling* CARBON OF CASTEL-JALOUX *to give an order*):
Captain . . .
(*He is arrested by* CARBON'S *appearance*) Damn my soul,
You look well, too.

CARBON (*flushed, and hiding a bottle behind him, with an evasive gesture*): Oh . . .
GUICHE: I ordered them to roll
A cannon yonder. . . . 'Tis a surplus one.
Your men may find a use for such a gun.
A CADET (*bowing profoundly*): Charming solicitude!
ANOTHER (*smiling graciously upon him*): Oh, sweet attention!
GUICHE: They are lunatics!
(*Dryly.*) It may be well to mention
The danger of recoil.
FIRST CADET: Ah, pfftt!
GUICHE (*taking a step toward him, furious*): If I would soil
My hands . . .
THE CADET: The Gascons' cannon won't recoil.
GUICHE (*seizing him by the arm*): You are drunk! On what?
THE CADET: Powder's approaching smell.
GUICHE (*shrugging his shoulders, pushes him away and goes eagerly to* ROXANE): Your resolution, Mistress? Deign to tell
You will go.
ROXANE: I stay.
GUICHE: Oh, fly!
ROXANE: No.
GUICHE: Be it so.
Give me a musket.
CARBON: What?
GUICHE: I shall not go.
CYRANO: At last, my lord, you give true courage place.
FIRST CADET: Is there a Gascon, underneath his lace?
ROXANE: What?
GUICHE: I'll not quit a lady in such need.
SECOND CADET (*to the first*): Say, boy! I move we ask him to our feed.
(*All the food reappears as if by magic.*)
GUICHE (*whose eyes brighten*): Victuals!

A THIRD CADET: All doublets sheltered things to eat.
GUICHE (*mastering himself,—haughtily*):
You think that I will touch your broken meat?
CYRANO (*saluting*): Sir, you progress!
GUICHE: Fastin', I'll carry on.
(*A slight trace of the Gascon accent escapes him.*)
FIRST CADET (*exulting*): *Fastin'!* The accent!
GUICHE (*laughing*): Me?
THE CADET: A Gascon born!
(*They all begin a war dance of delight.*)

CARBON OF CASTEL-JALOUX (*who has disappeared behind the breastworks for a moment, reappears on the crest.*)
I have placed my pikemen, trusty men and true.
(*He points to a line of pikes passing, beyond the ridge.*)
GUICHE (*to* ROXANE, *bowing low*): Will you come with me, for this last review?
(*She takes his hand and they go up toward the breastworks. Everybody doffs his hat and follows.*)
CHRISTIAN (*going to* CYRANO, *hurriedly*): Speak quickly!
(*As* ROXANE *appears on the crest of the ramparts, the lances disappear, lowered in salute. A cheer arises. She bows.*)
THE PIKEMEN (*without*): Vivat!
CHRISTIAN: Tell thy secret, then.
CYRANO: In case Roxane . . .
CHRISTIAN: Well, what?
CYRANO: Should speak again
Of . . . letters . . .
CHRISTIAN: Yes . . .
CYRANO: Don't show thy foolishness
Being surprised. . . .
CHRISTIAN: At what?
CYRANO: O Lord! I must confess!
It is quite simple . . . I just thought . . . to-day . . .
Seeing her . . . thou hast . . .
CHRISTIAN: Hurry!

CYRANO: Thou hast, I say . . .
Written more often than thou knowest.
CHRISTIAN: What?
CYRANO: Damn it! I swore you'd write! Hast thou forgot?
I wrote for thee,—sometimes not telling thee.
CHRISTIAN: Ah!
CYRANO: It was simple.
CHRISTIAN: But . . . how could it be?
There's the blockade.
CYRANO: Oh, before dawn . . . I knew
A place to cross their . . .
CHRISTIAN (*crossing his arms on his breast*): That was simple, too?
How often did I write? Each week? Twice? Thrice?
Four times?
CYRANO: More.
CHRISTIAN: Every day?
CYRANO: Why . . . each day . . . twice.
CHRISTIAN (*violently*): And they so moved thee,—were so strong to stir,
They made thee face death . . . ?
CYRANO (*seeing* ROXANE, *who comes down*):
'Sh. Not before her!
(*He hurriedly re-enters his tent.*)

SCENE VIII

ROXANE, CHRISTIAN; *in the background, passing and repassing, the Cadets;* GUICHE *and* CARBON OF CASTEL-JALOUX, *who give orders.*

ROXANE (*running to* CHRISTIAN): Christian! Oh, now . . .
CHRISTIAN (*taking her hands in his*): And now, Oh tell me why
Thou camest . . . found the boldness to defy
The cruel road, the ranks of rowdy reiters,
And come to me. Ah, why?
ROXANE: It was . . . the letters!

CHRISTIAN: Thou sayst . . . ?
ROXANE: Thy letters made me reckless, bold;
They made me face these perils manifold.
Ah, think how many you have sent, my love,
Always more beautiful.
CHRISTIAN: Could letters move
Thee so? . . .
ROXANE: Thou knowest not their power.
I have adored thee since that magic hour
Under my window, when a new voice cried
And showed the soul thou wast so fain to hide.
Ah, well,—thy letters for a month all breathe
The sweetness of that night,—the jasmine wreathe
—The enfolding tenderness! My lover,—see,
I could not choose but come! Penelope
Would not have tarried at her tapistry
Had Lord Ulysses writ, as thou to me.
She would have tossed her woollen balls aside,
And sped, like Helen, to her lover's side!
CHRISTIAN: But . . .
ROXANE: I read and read again. Joy mixed with grief;
I was with thee. And every written leaf
Was like a petal wafted from thy soul;—
Each word, a flame;—a living fire, the whole,
Of love, sincere and strong!
CHRISTIAN: Strong? . . . And sincere?
That could be felt, Roxane?
ROXANE: Ah, yes, my dear!
CHRISTIAN: And so you came. . . .
ROXANE: I came! (Christian, my king,
My love, you'd lift me up if I should fling
Myself low at your feet. So there I lay
My soul which always at your feet shall stay.)
I come to seek thy pardon. (Meet and right
To ask forgiveness, having death in sight!)

That at the first, in my frivolity,
I loved thy beauty, so insulting thee.

CHRISTIAN (*horrified*): Ah, Roxane!

ROXANE: Later, learning greater things,
—A bird that flutters, ere it trusts its wings,—
Thy beauty bound me, and thy spirit drew.
I loved thee, then, for both.

CHRISTIAN: And now? Speak true!

ROXANE: Ah, now thyself thyself has overthrown.
At last I love thee for thy soul alone!

CHRISTIAN (*starting back*): Ah! Roxane!

ROXANE: So, be happy. To be loved
For fleshly garments that can be removed,
To a great spirit were a conquest mean.
I have forgot thy face, thy soul being seen.
Thy beauty won me. . . . It is all forgot!
I see thee better,—and I see thee not.

CHRISTIAN: Oh!

ROXANE: Dost thou doubt a triumph so complete?

CHRISTIAN (*dolorously*): Roxane!

ROXANE: I know! Is such a love too sweet
For thy belief?

CHRISTIAN: I do not want such love!
I want to be loved just for . . .

ROXANE: Just to prove
All women love alike a handsome face?
Mourn not the old love! Give a better, place!

CHRISTIAN: The old love was the best.

ROXANE: Nay, nay, I tell
Now I love better,—now I first love well!
'Tis what thy soul has built that I adore.
Less beautiful. . . .

CHRISTIAN: Hush!

ROXANE: I should love thee more!
Though all thy beauty in the flesh were gone. . . .

CHRISTIAN: Oh, don't say that!

ROXANE: Nay, but I must say on!
CHRISTIAN: Ugly?
ROXANE: I swear it!
CHRISTIAN: God!
ROXANE: Is joy so great?
CHRISTIAN (*in a choking voice*): Yes. . . .
ROXANE: What ails thee?
CHRISTIAN: Naught. A word to someone. Wait.
ROXANE: But . . .
CHRISTIAN (*pointing to a group of Cadets in the background*):
I took thee from them,—and they need thee so,—
Thy smile to light their dying, Roxane,—Go!
ROXANE (*deeply moved*): Dear Christian!
(*She goes toward the Gascons, who respectfully crowd around her.*)

SCENE IX

CHRISTIAN, CYRANO; *in the background,* ROXANE *talking gaily to* CARBON *and some of the Cadets*

CHRISTIAN (*toward* CYRANO'S *tent*): Cyrano?
CYRANO (*comes out, equipped for the approaching battle*):
Thou art pale. What moves
Thee, lad?
CHRISTIAN: She doesn't love me!
CYRANO: What!
CHRISTIAN: 'Tis thee she loves.
CYRANO: No!
CHRISTIAN: She only loves my soul!
CYRANO: No!
CHRISTIAN: Yes, sir!
'Tis thee she loves, . . . and thou, thou lovest her!
CYRANO: I?
CHRISTIAN: I know it.
CYRANO: Truth.
CHRISTIAN: To madness.

CYRANO: More.
CHRISTIAN: God His grace,
Tell her!
CYRANO: No!
CHRISTIAN: Why, why not?
CYRANO: Look at my face!
CHRISTIAN: She would love me ugly!
CYRANO: She said that?
CHRISTIAN: Just that.
CYRANO: Ah, I am glad that she could tell you that!
But don't believe this madness. It is naught.
—God! I am glad that she has had that thought!—
—Could say that!—But go, lad, for words are light.
Don't become plain. She'd owe me much despite.
CHRISTIAN: I am going to see!
CYRANO: No!
CHRISTIAN: —Learn what she really meant.
Thou shalt tell her all.
CYRANO: Oh, not this punishment!
CHRISTIAN: I, kill thy happiness,—because I come
To earth well-favoured?
CYRANO: Put thine in the tomb,
I,—being favoured by this circumstance
I can express . . . what thou canst feel, perchance?
CHRISTIAN: Tell her.
CYRANO: He tempts me still, the devil or his elf!
CHRISTIAN: I am tired of being rival to myself!
CYRANO: Christian!
CHRISTIAN: Our secret union scarce exists,
—If we live, can be broken. . . .
CYRANO: He persists!
CHRISTIAN: I will be loved myself, or not at all.
We've got to see. Stay here. I am going to call
Roxane. Then I'll walk to the end
Of the guard-station. Speak to her, my friend.

I shall return. And so, at last, we'll know
Which of us two.

CYRANO: 'Tis thou!

CHRISTIAN: But . . . I hope so.
(*He calls.*) Roxane!

CYRANO: No! No!

ROXANE (*running*): What?

CHRISTIAN: Cyrano will say
Something you ought to hear.
(*She goes eagerly to* CYRANO. CHRISTIAN *goes out.*)

SCENE X

ROXANE, CYRANO; *later,* LE BRET, CARBON OF CASTEL-JALOUX, *the Cadets,* RAGUENEAU, *the* COUNT OF GUICHE, *etc.*

ROXANE: Something? . . .

CYRANO (*wildly*): He's gone away!
(*To* ROXANE) Nothing. He gives . . . You know him, so you know
He gives importance to just nothing.

ROXANE: Oh!
He doubts what I have told him? I could see . . .

CYRANO (*taking her hand*): Roxane, was what you told him verity?

ROXANE: Yes, I would love him were he . . .
(*She hesitates.*)

CYRANO (*smiling sorrowfully*): You are fain
To shirk that word. . . .

ROXANE: But . . .

CYRANO: It will not give me pain.
Even ugly?

ROXANE: Even ugly!
(*A sound of musket fire, without.*) Hark! We are stormed!

CYRANO (*ardently*): Frightful?

ROXANE: Frightful.

CYRANO: Even deformed?
ROXANE: Deformed.
CYRANO: Grotesque?
ROXANE: Never grotesque to me.
CYRANO: You would love him still?
ROXANE: And still more ardently!
CYRANO (*aside, madly*): My God! 'Tis true! And happiness has come!
(*Aloud, to* ROXANE): Listen, Roxane . . .
LE BRET (*entering hastily and speaking in a whisper*): Cyrano!
CYRANO (*turning*): Hein?
LE BRET (*putting his finger on his lips*): Be dumb.
(*He speaks a few words in a whisper.*)
CYRANO (*letting go of* ROXANE'S *hand and uttering a cry*): Ah!
ROXANE: What troubles you?
CYRANO (*stupefied; aside*): 'Tis finished!
(*New volleys of musketry and detonation of artillery.*)
ROXANE: Firing! The din! The reek
Of smoke!
(*She goes up to see what is taking place.*)
CYRANO: Aye, it is finished! I can never speak!
ROXANE (*trying to press forward*): What passes?
CYRANO (*holding her back*): Nothing!
(*The Cadets enter, carrying something which they conceal from* ROXANE, *standing closely in a group about this burden.*)
ROXANE: These men . . . ?
CYRANO (*leading her aside*): Come away!
ROXANE: What were you going to say?
CYRANO: I . . . going to say?
Nothing. I swear it. I abjure the whole.
(*Solemnly*) I swear that Christian's spirit, that his soul . . .
Was . . .
(*He catches himself, terrified.*) is . . . the noblest . . .
ROXANE: Was?
(*With a wild cry*) Ah!

(*She rushes forward, scattering the group that tries to intercept her.*)

CYRANO: It is done!

ROXANE (*seeing* CHRISTIAN, *lying on his cloak*): Christian!

LE BRET (*to* CYRANO): Their first shot . . . and the only one.

(ROXANE *throws herself on* CHRISTIAN'S *body. There is renewed firing. Clank of arms. Rattle of guns. Drums.*)

CARBON OF CASTEL-JALOUX (*sword in hand*): 'Tis the attack. To arms!

(*Followed by the Cadets he goes over the top of the breastworks.*)

ROXANE: Christian!

VOICE OF CARBON (*beyond the fortifications*): *Double time!*

ROXANE: Christian!

CARBON: *Fall in!*

ROXANE: Christian!

CARBON: *Measure! Prime!*

(RAGUENEAU *has run in, carrying water in a helmet.*)

CHRISTIAN (*in a dying voice*): Roxane!

CYRANO (*quick and low in* CHRISTIAN'S *ear, while* ROXANE *frantically tears a bit of linen from her breast and dampens it in the water* RAGUENEAU *has brought*): 'Tis thee she loves, thee only!

She has said!

(CHRISTIAN *closes his eyes.*)

ROXANE: Ah, what, my love?

CARBON: *Ramrods!*

ROXANE (*to* CYRANO): He is not . . . dead?

CARBON: *Load! Ready! Aim!*

ROXANE: Cold, to the touch

His cheek against my own! Cold, cold to . . .

CARBON: *Touch!*

ROXANE: A letter here . . .

(She opens it.) For me!

CYRANO (*aside*): My letter!

CARBON: *Fire!*

(*Musket fire. Shouts. Clash of battle.*)

CYRANO (*tries to free his hand, which* ROXANE *clutches, as she kneels*): Roxane, they are fighting!

ROXANE (*clinging to him*): Pity my desire,
One moment! He is dead. You knew his heart!
(*She weeps gently.*) Was he not exquisite,—a soul apart,
Marvelous?

CYRANO (*standing, head uncovered*): Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE: More than words can express,
A poet . . . ?

CYRANO: Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE: Pure spirit?

CYRANO: Yes,
Roxane!

ROXANE: A heart profound, beyond earth's common span,
A soul sublime and charming?

CYRANO (*earnestly*): Yes, Roxane!

ROXANE (*throwing herself on* CHRISTIAN'S *body*):
He is dead!

CYRANO (*aside, drawing his sword*): I'd die ere day grows dim,
Since all unknowing she mourns me in him.
(*Trumpets in the distance.*)

THE COUNT OF GUICHE (*appears on the ramparts, bareheaded, wounded in the forehead; calling in a ringing voice*):
Fanfare of brasses! 'Tis the signal sealed!
The French with food returning to the field!
Hold the line, yet!

ROXANE: Upon his letter, stains,
Blood,—tears!

A VOICE (*without*): Surrender!

VOICES OF THE CADETS: No!

RAGUENEAU (*who has climbed on the coachman's box and is watching the engagement*): The Spaniard gains!

CYRANO (*to the* COUNT, *indicating* ROXANE):
Take her! I am going to charge!

ROXANE (*kissing the letter and speaking in a faint voice*):
His letter, sealed
With tears and blood!

RAGUENEAU (*leaping from his high seat to run to her*):
She's fainting!

GUICHE (*on the ramparts, to the Cadets, raging*): Hold hard!

A VOICE (*without*): Yield!

VOICES OF CADETS: No!

CYRANO (*to* GUICHE): You have proved your valour, sir. Take her away!

GUICHE (*who runs to* ROXANE *and lifts her in his arms*):
So be it. Hold them! We have gained the day
If you gain time!

CYRANO: Why, good!
(*Crying out to* ROXANE, *as the* COUNT OF GUICHE, *aided by* RAGUENEAU, *carries her off, fainting*):
Farewell, Roxane!
(*A deafening din. Cries. Tumult. Cadets appear, wounded, falling.* CYRANO, *rushing to the battle, is arrested on the crest of the earthworks by* CASTEL-JALOUX, *who is covered with blood.*)

CARBON: We waver! I've two gun-shots, partisan.

CYRANO (*calling to the Cadets*): Hardily, lads! No budging!
(*To* CARBON, *whom he supports in his arms*): Have no fear!
I have two deaths to avenge, to-day and here,—
Christian's . . . My happiness!
(*They come down.* CYRANO *seizes the lance to which is fastened* ROXANE'S *handkerchief.*) Float, little flag!
(*He plants it in the ground, and calls to the Cadets.*)
Rally, boys! Smash them!
(*To the Fifer*) Play! The fife!
(*To the Cadets*) *Don't lag!*
(*The Fifer plays. The wounded struggle to their feet. The Cadets swarming up the ramparts group themselves around* CYRANO *and the little flag. The Coach is covered with*

men; it bristles with arquebuses; it is transformed into a redoubt.)

A CADET (*retreating, appears on the crest of the fortification, still fighting; he cries*): They climb the ramparts!

(*He falls, dead.*)

CYRANO: We'll salute our guests!

(*The ramparts are suddenly crowned with terrible ranks of the enemy. The great Imperial standard is raised.*)

CYRANO: Fire!

(*Firing all along the ragged line.*)

ORDERS IN THE ENEMY'S RANKS: Fire!

(*A murderous ripost. The Cadets fall on every side.*)

A SPANISH OFFICER (*uncovering*):

What men are these who hug death to their breasts?

CYRANO (*declaiming, erect amid a storm of lead*):

These are Gascony's darling Cadets
Of Carbon of Castel-Jaloux;
Brazen braggarts, each man of them bets . . .
(*He hurls himself forward, followed by a handful of survivors.*)
They are Gascony's darling . . .
(*The rest is lost in the tumult of battle.*)

(*Curtain*)

ACT V

Cyrano's Gazette

Fifteen years later. 1655. Park of the Convent occupied by the Ladies of the Cross, at Paris.

Superb shadows. On the Left, the house, with a vast flight of steps, several doors opening upon it.

In the middle of the scene stands a huge tree, solitary in the centre of a little oval space.

On the Right, among tall box trees, a semi-circular stone bench.

The background is traversed by a walk overarched by chestnut trees; this leads to a chapel door, Right, seen through the branches of the trees. Beyond the double curtain of these trees, there are glimpses of lawn, more shaded walks, thickets, the reaches of the park; the sky.

A little side door of the chapel opens upon a colonnade engarlanded with reddening Autumn vines. In the Right foreground, this is lost behind the box hedge.

It is Autumn. Above the pure green of the turf, all the leafage is sere and brown.

The evergreen masses of box and yew stand out darkly.

A heap of yellow leaves lies under each tree. Leaves are falling everywhere. They rustle under foot. They half cover the entrance steps and lie on the stone benches.

Between the bench on the Right and the Tree is a tall embroidery frame, in front of which a little sewing chair has been placed.

There are baskets full of silken skeins and woollen balls.

A piece of tapistry begun.

As the curtain rises, the sisters come and go in the park.

Some of them are sitting on the stone bench, around an older nun. The leaves fall always.

SCENE I

MOTHER MARGARET, SISTER MARTHA, SISTER CLAIRE, *the* SISTERS

SISTER MARTHA (*to* MOTHER MARGARET):
She looked twice—Sister Claire did—in the glass
To set her cornet straight.
MOTHER MARGARET (*to* SISTER CLAIRE): That's wrong. Alas!
SISTER CLAIRE: But I saw Sister Martha take a plum
Out of the tart.
MOTHER MARGARET (*to* SISTER MARTHA): Oh, that was ugly.
Come!
SISTER CLAIRE: A little glance!
SISTER MARTHA: The littlest of plums!
MOTHER MARGARET: Sir Cyrano shall hear it when he comes.
SISTER CLAIRE (*dismayed*): No! He would tease us, Mother,
if you should!
SISTER MARTHA: "Nuns are so vain,"
SISTER CLAIRE: "So greedy,"
MOTHER MARGARET (*smiling*): "And so good."
SISTER CLAIRE: Is it true, Mother Margaret, of Jesus,
He has come these ten years . . . ?
MOTHER MARGARET: More than that. He sees us
Each week since first his cousin came to wear
Her sable mourning midst our linen fair,
Seeking this shelter fourteen years ago,
A stately blackbird midst my birds of snow.
SISTER MARTHA: He only, since she came to be our guest,
Lightens the grief that never quits her breast.
ALL THE SISTERS: He is so droll!
So merry!
He can tell
Such tales! He teases us!
We love him well!
We make him tartlets.
Oh, I love to stick
Them full of plums!

SISTER MARTHA: He's a poor Catholic.
SISTER CLAIRE: We will convert him!
THE SISTERS: Yes! Yes!
MOTHER MARGARET: Children, no.
I must forbid you to torment him so.
He might come less. Remember this command.
SISTER MARTHA: But . . . God . . .
MOTHER MARGARET (*tranquilly*): God knows him. God will understand.
SISTER MARTHA: But every Saturday to hear him say,
"Sister, A-ha, I ate flesh yesterday."
MOTHER MARGARET: He tells you that? Well, when he said it last
For two whole days he had not broken fast.
SISTER MARTHA: Mother!
MOTHER MARGARET: Yes, he is poor.
SISTER MARTHA: Who told you?
MOTHER MARGARET: His good friend
My lord Le Bret.
SISTER MARTHA: Nobody helps him?
MOTHER MARGARET: None. It would offend.
(*In a shaded walk in the background,* ROXANE *appears, robed in black and wearing a widow's cap and long veil. The* COUNT OF GUICHE, *magnificent, and aging, walks at her side. They come down slowly.* MOTHER MARGARET *rises*):
Let us go in. The Lady Madeleine
Walks in the park with visitors.
SISTER MARTHA (*whispering to* SISTER CLAIRE): I'd fain
Know is't the Marshall Duke of Gramont?
SISTER CLAIRE (*looking and nodding*): So.
SISTER MARTHA: The last time that he came was months ago.
SISTER CLAIRE: He is so busy,—court,—camp . . .
SISTER MARTHA: Worldly care!
(*They go out.* GUICHE *and* ROXANE *come down in silence. They stop near the tapistry frame. A pause.*)

SCENE II

ROXANE, *the* DUKE OF GRAMONT, *once* COUNT OF GUICHE; *later,* LE BRET, RAGUENEAU

THE DUKE: So you abide here, always, vainly fair,
Still mourning?
ROXANE: Always.
THE DUKE: Faithful still?
ROXANE: Always.
THE DUKE (*after a moment's silence*): You have pardoned me?
ROXANE: Yes, in this holy place.
(*Silence again falls between them.*)
THE DUKE: Was he in truth a being . . . ?
ROXANE: Could you know!
THE DUKE: Could I . . . Perhaps I failed there, long ago.
Still his last letter next your heart is stored?
ROXANE: Sweet scapulary on this velvet cord.
THE DUKE: Even dead, you love him?
ROXANE: Sometimes. Oh, meseems
He is but half dead. Through my life it beams,
His living love, a shelter, a caress.
THE DUKE (*after another interval of silence*):
Cyrano come to see you?
ROXANE: Often, yes.
This old friend takes the place of my gazettes.
—And is as regular. A Sister sets
His armchair where you stand, beneath this tree.
I sew, and wait. The hour strikes. There will be
—I do not even turn my head!—his cane
Upon the steps. He sits down, mocks again
My endless tapistry; then day by day
Gives the weeks' chronicle.
(LE BRET *appears on the steps.*) Ah, see! Le Bret!
(LE BRET *comes down.*) How fares our friend?
LE BRET: Ill.
THE DUKE: Oh!
ROXANE (*to the* DUKE): Exaggerated!

LE BRET: I told him so! Abandoned, poor, and hated,—
Still his epistles make new enemies.
He fights the world entire,—hypocrisies.—
Pietists,—plagiarists,—all earthly error.
ROXANE: Always his sword inspires such mortal terror
No man will face it. He is safe.
THE DUKE (*shaking his head*): Who knows?
LE BRET: I fear not men but those more subtle foes,
Solitude, Famine, graying gaunt December,
Entering with wolfish tread his dismal chamber.
By these assassins deadliest blows are dealt.
—Each day he takes a hole up in his belt.
His poor big nose looks like old ivory.
One thin black suit of serge on earth has he.
THE DUKE: Not Fortune's favourite, truly, but—Gadzook
Pity him not too much.
LE BRET (*with a bitter smile*): My Lord, the Duke . . .
THE DUKE: Pity him not too much! Unbound by pacts,
He keeps his freedom,—thoughts no less than acts.
LE BRET: Lord Marshall . . .
THE DUKE (*haughtily*): Yes, he has naught; I, all;—I understand,—
Yet I were very fain to take his hand.
(*Bowing to* ROXANE.) Good-bye.
ROXANE: Let me conduct you . . .
(THE DUKE *bows to* LE BRET *and with* ROXANE *walks towards the steps.*)
THE DUKE: Envious . . . Yes!
Sometimes, when one has made his life's success,
One feels,—not finding, God knows, much amiss,—
A thousand small distastes, whose sum is this;
Not quite remorse, but an obscure disorder.
One's ducal robes drag always on their border,
While on life's stair a mounting foot one sets,
A stir of lost illusions, dry regrets,
As, while you mount these steps, the ear perceives
Your robes of mourning rustle dying leaves.

ROXANE (*ironically*): You,—become dreamer?
THE DUKE: Eh . . . Yes!
(*As he is going out, he turns abruptly.*) Le Bret!
(*To* ROXANE): With your consent . . . One word.
(*He goes to* LE BRET *and speaks in a low voice.*)
True, no one dares to meet him, yet I've heard
How many hate your friend. And yesterday
I caught this bit, at Court,—we were at play,—
"An accident might kill this Cyrano."
LE BRET: Ah?
THE DUKE: Bid him keep close at home . . . be prudent.
LE BRET (*raising his arms to heaven*): Oh!
Prudent! I'll go to warn him, but . . .
ROXANE (*who has remained on the steps, to a* SISTER *who comes to her*): What is it?
THE SISTER: May Ragueneau see you, Madame?
ROXANE: Yes.
(*To the* DUKE *and* LE BRET.) This visit
Will be a tale of woe. Once on a time
Ragueneau was poet. Since that rôle sublime
He has been . . .
LE BRET: Beadle . . .
ROXANE: Actor . . .
LE BRET: Bath-house-man . . .
ROXANE: Wig-maker . . .
LE BRET: Archlute teacher . . .
ROXANE: What new plan
Brings him to-day?
RAGUENEAU (*enters precipitately*): Madam . . .
(*He sees* LE BRET.) Sir . . . !
ROXANE (*smiling*): Recount your woes
To him. I shall return.
RAGUENEAU: But Madam . . .
(ROXANE *does not hear him; she goes out with the* DUKE. RAGUENEAU *goes down to* LE BRET.)

SCENE III

Le Bret, Ragueneau

Ragueneau: I suppose
You being here, it's best she shouldn't know.
—I went to see your friend a while ago.
Not twenty paces from his house, I spied
Him coming out. I meant to reach his side.
He turned the corner, and I ran. A glance
Showed from a window . . . accident,—perchance,—
A lackey dropped a heavy chunk of wood.

Le Bret: The cowards! Cyrano!

Ragueneau: I came . . . I stood . . .

Le Bret: Oh!

Ragueneau: By our friend, our poet. Running red
Upon the ground, blood streamed from his poor head.

Le Bret: He is . . . dead?

Ragueneau: No, but . . . God! I got him home,—
Lord! what a place for such a man to come.

Le Bret: He suffers?

Ragueneau: No, no, sir . . . He didn't wake.

Le Bret: A leech? . . .

Ragueneau: One came, sir, for sweet pity's sake.

Le Bret: Oh, my poor Cyrano! We must not tell
Roxane too suddenly. This doctor . . . ?

Ragueneau: Well,
He talked . . . of fever . . . and of meninges . . .
—Oh, his poor head in linen bandages!
Come! Let us run! His pillow's all untended,
And if he tries to move . . . then all is ended.

Le Bret (*leading him to the Right*): This way is shortest . . . by the chapel. . . . See.

Roxane (*appearing on the steps and seeing* Le Bret *disappearing by the colonnade which leads to the side door of the chapel*): My lord Le Bret!

(LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU *run on, without answering.*)
Dear me!
Our Ragueneau must have a woeful story.
(*She comes down the steps.*)

SCENE IV

ROXANE, *alone; later, two* SISTERS *for a moment*

ROXANE: September's closing day is full of glory.
My sadness smiles. April too dazzling beams.
Autumn more gently blends with wistful dreams.
(*She sits down to her embroidery. Two* SISTERS *coming out of the house carry a large armchair and put it under the big tree.*) Here is the classic armchair, where shall rest
My old friend.
SISTER MARTHA: It's the parlour's very best.
ROXANE: Thank you, my Sister.
(*The* SISTERS *go out.*)
He comes. . . . The hour sounds. . . .
—My skeins.—The hour has struck. Nay, this astounds,
What! For the first time will he now be late?
My thimble. . . . There! . . . The Sister at the gate
Must be exhorting him. . . .
(*Time passes.*) Past all belief.
. . . He'll not delay. . . . Hist! No . . . a falling leaf.
(*She brushes away a dead leaf that has fallen on her work.*)
. . . My scissors? In my bag! What holds him back?
Nothing could keep . . .
A SISTER (*appearing on the steps*):
My lord of Bergerac.

SCENE V

ROXANE, CYRANO, *and for a moment,* SISTER MARTHA

ROXANE (*without turning*): What did I say?
(*She works at her tapistry.* CYRANO, *very pale, his plumed hat pulled down over his eyes, enters. The* SISTER *who an-*

nounced him disappears. He begins to come down the steps, slowly and making an evident effort to hold himself erect. He bears heavily on his cane. ROXANE *works diligently.*)

ROXANE: Tut! This shade appears
Too light . . . 'tis faded.
(*To* CYRANO, *in a tone of amicable reproach.*) After fourteen years,
Late, for the first time!

CYRANO (*who has reached his armchair and sat down, speaking in a cheerful voice that contrasts sharply with his appearance*):
Yes. Lord, I am vexed.
Delayed . . . and bless my soul, on what pretext!

ROXANE: By . . . ?

CYRANO: By a visitor most loath to wait.

ROXANE (*absent-mindedly; working*): Unwelcome?

CYRANO: No . . . but too importunate.

ROXANE: You sent him off?

CYRANO: Yes. I was bold to say,
Your pardon but to-day is Saturday.
I am expected. 'Tis not in your power
To make me fail her. Meet me in an hour!

ROXANE (*lightly*):
We'll keep him waiting if so soon he calls.
I shall not let you go till evening falls.

CYRANO: It may be, he will not so long delay.
(*He closes his eyes and is silent for a moment.*)
(SISTER MARTHA *crosses the turf from the chapel. She is going toward the steps.*)

ROXANE (*to* CYRANO): Not teasing Sister Martha?

CYRANO (*starting, and opening his eyes*): Yes.
(*Calling in a jocular voice.*) Sister! Hey!
(SISTER MARTHA *comes softly up.*)
Those pretty eyes still looking at your feet?

SISTER MARTHA (*raising her eyes and smiling*): But . . .
(*She looks at him and makes a startled gesture.*) Oh! . . .

CYRANO (*putting his finger on his lips and indicating* ROXANE):

'Sh, it is nothing.
(*In a loud voice.*) Friday, I ate meat.

SISTER MARTHA: I know.
(*Aside*) That's why he looks so pale. (*Aloud*) I think
I'll make a hot tissane for you to drink,
In the refrectory. Don't say me nay.
You will come?

CYRANO: Yes, yes.

SISTER MARTHA: Ah, you are good to-day.

ROXANE (*who hears them whispering*): Is she trying to convert you?

SISTER MARTHA: Oh, so hard
I am trying *not* to!

CYRANO: Is my saint off guard?
My sermon's missing. Now, here is a wonder!
(*With serio-comic intensity*)
Now it's my turn to startle you, by thunder!
Hark! I permit you. . . .
(*He seems to be searching for a very teasing jest and to have hit upon it.*) —You'll recall it long—
To . . . pray for me to-night at evensong!

ROXANE: Oh, oh!

CYRANO (*laughing*): Sister doubts her hearing and her vision.

SISTER MARTHA (*softly*): I have not waited, sir, for your permission.
(*She goes out.*)

CYRANO (*turning once more to* ROXANE *bent over her work*):
The devil fetch me if I hope to see
That labour finished.

ROXANE: Still that pleasantry!
(*A passing breeze shakes down a shower of leaves.*)

CYRANO: Dead leaves!

ROXANE: Pale golden, all,
Yellow Venetian gold!

CYRANO: How well they fall!
On the short journey from the branch to earth,
Dying they bring one beauty more to birth.

Though dreading dusty death that looms in sight,
They give their fall the loveliness of flight.

ROXANE: You, melancholy?

CYRANO (*recalling himself, quickly*): Roxane! Not at all.

ROXANE: Come, let us leave the dead leaves where they fall,
And talk of news. What new thing have you seen?
Read my Gazette!

CYRANO: Hear.

ROXANE: Ah.

CYRANO (*who is growing paler and paler and struggling against mortal agony*): Saturday, nineteen,
After eight helpings of his pet conserve,
A fever seized the King. His leeches serve
Death notice on the traitorous attack.
It is repulsed. The royal pulse runs slack.
On Sunday, at the great ball of the Queen,
Seven hundred tapers and three score were seen;
Our troops, they said, met John the Austrian;
They hung four sorcerers. The story ran
Lady Athis' lapdog had a dose and pack.

ROXANE: Ah, hold your tongue, my lord of Bergerac!

CYRANO: On Monday, naught. Lygdamire's changed favorites.

ROXANE: Oh!

CYRANO: Tuesday, the Court repaired to Fontainbleau
Wednesday, the Monglat told Fiesque nay.
Thursday, Mancini's nearly queen,—they say.
The twenty-fifth, the Monglat quite relented.
The twenty-sixth . . .

(*He closes his eyes. His head falls on his breast. Silence.*)

ROXANE (*surprised by the silence, turns, looks at him, and rises, in alarm*): Oh, Heaven! Has he fainted?

(*She runs to him, crying.*) Cyrano!

CYRANO (*opening his eyes, his voice vague*): What is it? Where . . . ?

(*He sees* ROXANE *bending over him and, hurriedly pressing his hat more firmly down on his forehead, and pulling himself up in his chair with an effort, speaks more clearly.*)

No . . . No . . . I have not swooned . . .
Naught is the matter.

ROXANE: Oh, but . . .

CYRANO: My old wound
. . . Of Arras . . . sometimes . . . Ah . . . you know!

ROXANE: Poor friend!

CYRANO: But it is naught. 'Twill pass . . .
(*He smiles with an effort.*) It has an end.

ROXANE (*standing near him*): Each of us wears a wound. My heart must hold
Always the old wound, that is never old.
(*She puts her hand on her heart.*)
Here, 'neath his letter. You have understood!
That yellowing page, still stained with tears and blood.
(*Twilight begins to fall.*)

CYRANO: His letter. You have said . . . perhaps some day,
You would let me read it.

ROXANE: Read his letter?

CYRANO: Pray
You . . . to-day . . . I would . . .

ROXANE (*giving him the little bag, from the cord*): Take it.

CYRANO: You bid me? I . . .

ROXANE: Open it. Read.
(*She goes back to her work, and begins to sort and fold the silks.*)

CYRANO (*reading*): *"Roxane, farewell. I am about to die."*

ROXANE (*pausing, astonished*): Aloud?

CYRANO: *"This evening as I think, beloved;*
My soul, weighed down with love untold, unproved,
And I am dying. Never more, indeed
My dazzled eyes shall quaff . . .

ROXANE: Ah, how you read
His letter!

CYRANO (*reading*): *"Quaff your beauty's wine.*
Nor kiss, in flight, your gestures, all divine.
I see again one that so charmed my eye,
You touch your lovely brow. I strive to cry. . . .

ROXANE: How you read it . . . this letter!
CYRANO: *"So you may hear,*
Farewell!"
ROXANE: You read it. . . .
CYRANO: *"O, my dear, my dear,*
My treasure."
ROXANE: In a voice . . .
CYRANO: *"My love!"*
ROXANE: Whose chime
Rings in my heart . . . and not for the first time!
(*She comes near, very quietly. Unseen, she goes behind the armchair, and, leaning silently above him, she looks at the letter. The shadows deepen.*)
CYRANO: *"My heart will never leave you, O my dear!*
I am . . . will be on whatsoever sphere,
Always your lover, O my heart's one light."
ROXANE (*touching him gently on the shoulder*):
How can you read this letter? It is night.
(*He trembles, turns, sees her near him, makes a startled gesture; bows his head. A long silence. Then, in the deep shadows that have fallen, she says slowly, clasping her hands.*)
For fourteen years he has played out this part,
Being the old friend, come to cheer my heart!
CYRANO: Roxane!
ROXANE: 'Twas you!
CYRANO: No, Roxane!
ROXANE: Why disclaim?
I should have known it when he spoke my name!
CYRANO: It was not I!
ROXANE: 'Twas you!
CYRANO: No! No! I vow . . . !
ROXANE: Generous imposture! I perceive it now. . . .
The letters,—yours!
CYRANO: No!
ROXANE: Yours each dear, mad word!
Yours!

CYRANO: No!
ROXANE: And yours the voice that magic night I heard!
CYRANO: I swear, not mine!
ROXANE: And your soul called to me . . .
CYRANO: I did not love . . .
ROXANE: You loved me!
CYRANO: It was he!
ROXANE: You loved me!
CYRANO: No.
ROXANE: You whisper! I have moved you!
CYRANO: O, my dear love, I never, never loved you!
ROXANE: How many things are dead. What life appears!
Ah, why have you been silent fourteen years?
When it was all your letter,—even this,
The stain of tears!
CYRANO (*holding the letter out to her*): Aye,—but the blood was his.
ROXANE: Then why permit this silence so sublime
To end today?
CYRANO: Why?
(LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU *entering, running.*)

SCENE VI

The Same; LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU

LE BRET: It was fully time
We found . . . I knew we'd find him here!
CYRANO (*smiling, and trying to sit more erect*): Is that so odd?
LE BRET: He has killed himself by coming!
ROXANE: Gracious God!
The weakness . . . the half swoon . . . Dear God!
And yet . . .
CYRANO: 'Tis true, I had not finished my Gazette.
Died, Saturday the twenty-sixth, the hour not stated,
My lord of Bergerac, assassinated.

(*He lifts his hat. His head is seen covered with linen bandages.*)

ROXANE: What says he? Cyrano! This bandaged head!
Oh, what? . . .

CYRANO: "The only noble weapon," so I said . . .
"A knightly foeman," . . . and "on glory's field."
—The fullness of Fate's mockery revealed,
Here am I, killed from ambush where I stood,
By a hid lackey, with a block of wood.
Well done! I have missed in all things, even in Death.

RAGUENEAU: Ah, sir . . .

CYRANO: Don't weep, old friend, with shuddering breath.
(*He holds out his hand to him.*)
What hast thou now become, my poet brother?

RAGUENEAU (*through his tears*):
I'm . . . candle snuffer . . . at . . . Moliere's . . . I smother
The . . . lights . . .

CYRANO: Moliere's!

RAGUENEAU: But I shall quit to-morrow.
They played *Scapin* last night, and stooped to borrow
One of your scenes entire. I saw!

LE BRET: I, too.

RAGUENEAU: The famous "What the devil would he do?"

LE BRET: Moliere has filched it.

CYRANO: Tut! tut! He does well.
It ought to take, that scene. And *did* it tell?

RAGUENEAU (*sobbing*): Oh, Sir, they laughed and laughed!

CYRANO: My part is yet
To be the prompter whom all men forget.
(*To* ROXANE) Think of the balcony, the dusk-sweet air,
And Christian speaking. All my life is there;
I, telling in the dark my yearning story,
While others climb to take the kiss of glory!
At the tomb's edge, Fate's justice I declare,
Moliere has genius,—Christian was so fair!

(*The chapel bells have rung. And in the background along the shaded walks the* SISTERS *are seen, going to Evensong.*)

CYRANO: Let them go pray. For now the hour is near.

ROXANE (*rising to call*): Sister! Oh, Sister!

CYRANO: No, call no one here.
Ere you come back, I should have gone away.
(*The nuns enter the chapel. The organ is heard.*)
I longed for harmony to end my day.

ROXANE: I love you! Live!

CYRANO: In fairy tales, long since,
The princess said that, and the ugly prince
Lost all his plainness in that sudden sun.
But, see! I finish as I was begun.

ROXANE: I made your grief, I, I!

CYRANO: You made my bliss.
I lacked all woman's kindness, . . . even this . . .
My mother found me ugly. And I had
No sister. Lest they mock an ugly lad,
I shunned all women. You became my friend.
One soft gown brushed my path before the end.

LE BRET (*showing him the moonlight that filters through the branches*): Thy other love!

CYRANO (*smiling at the moon*): Welcome, fair friend above!

ROXANE: I loved but once, and twice I lose my love!

CYRANO (*to* LE BRET): I'll journey to that moonland opaline,
Unhampered,—eh, Le Bret?—by a machine.

ROXANE: What are you saying?

CYRANO: I shall have one prize.
They'll let me have the moon for paradise.
In yonder sphere, we shall hold converse high,
Galileo, and Socrates and I.

LE BRET (*suddenly rebellious*): No! No! It is too stupid, too unjust!
A hero and a poet in the dust!
To die! and so to die!

CYRANO: Le Bret, who scolds!
LE BRET (*bursting into uncontrollable sobbing*): Woe's me!
My friend! My friend!
CYRANO (*standing erect, his eyes roving*): Cadets of Gascony!
The elementary mass . . . the *hic* falls thus.
LE BRET: Still science, though he rave . . .
CYRANO: Copernicus
Said . . .
ROXANE: Oh!
CYRANO: "What the devil would he do.
And what a plague was his business to?"

Physicist and dreamer . . . these,
Rhymer, musician, fighter an it please,
And sailor of aerial seas;
Swordsman whose parry was attack;
Lover, lacking all love's keys;
Here he lies, this Hercules
Savien Cyrano Bergerac,—
All and nothing. Rest in peace.

I cry your pardon. I cannot delay.
This moonbeam comes to light me on my way.
(*He falls back into the chair.* ROXANE'S *tears recall him to reality; he looks at her, and, caressing the folds of her veil.*)
Ah, I would have you mourn him never less,
This beautiful, brave Christian! Yet 'twould bless
My passing, warm the coldness of my tomb,
If in your mourning both of us found room.
If in your veils, I had a little share!
ROXANE: I swear to you . . .
CYRANO (*seized with deadly trembling, rises with sudden violence*): No! No! Not in a chair!
(*They spring to his side.*)
Let no man hold me up. None!
(*He leans against the tree.*) Save this tree.
(*Silence.*)
He comes. With marble I am shod. And, see,

I am gloved with lead.
(*He draws himself erect.*) So here I make my stand.
(*He draws his sword.*) I'll meet him on my feet, and sword in hand!

LE BRET: Cyrano!

ROXANE: Cyrano!

(*They all start back, affrighted.*)

CYRANO: Your presumption grows!
Featureless Death, thou art leering at my nose!
(*He lifts his sword.*)
How say you? It is futile? Futile, yes!
Man does not battle only for success!
Nay! It is nobler if it be in vain!
Who are ye? Thousands, rushing in amain!
I know ye now,—mine ancient enemies!
Lies! Prejudice!
(*He lays about him with his sword.*) Aha, Hypocrisies!
Compromise! Cowardice!
Surrender? I?
Never! Ah, never! Thou, Stupidity!
I know I shall be beaten by your might.
What matters it! I fight! I fight! I fight!
(*He sweeps a great circle with his sword and stops, panting.*)
Yes, you take all, the laurel with the rose.
Take them! One thing I have guarded to the close.
I'll make obeisance to my God this night,
Sweep the blue threshold of immortal light,
With that you may not touch. Let none presume!
(*He lifts his sword high.*)
Stainless, unbent, I have kept . . .
(*His sword falls from his hand; he shudders and falls into the arms of* LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU.)

ROXANE (*bending over him and kissing his forehead*):
Ah! What?

CYRANO (*opens his eyes, knows her and smiles*): My plume!

(*Curtain*)

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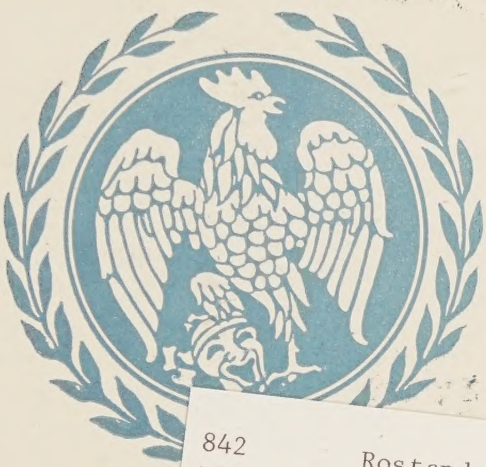

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